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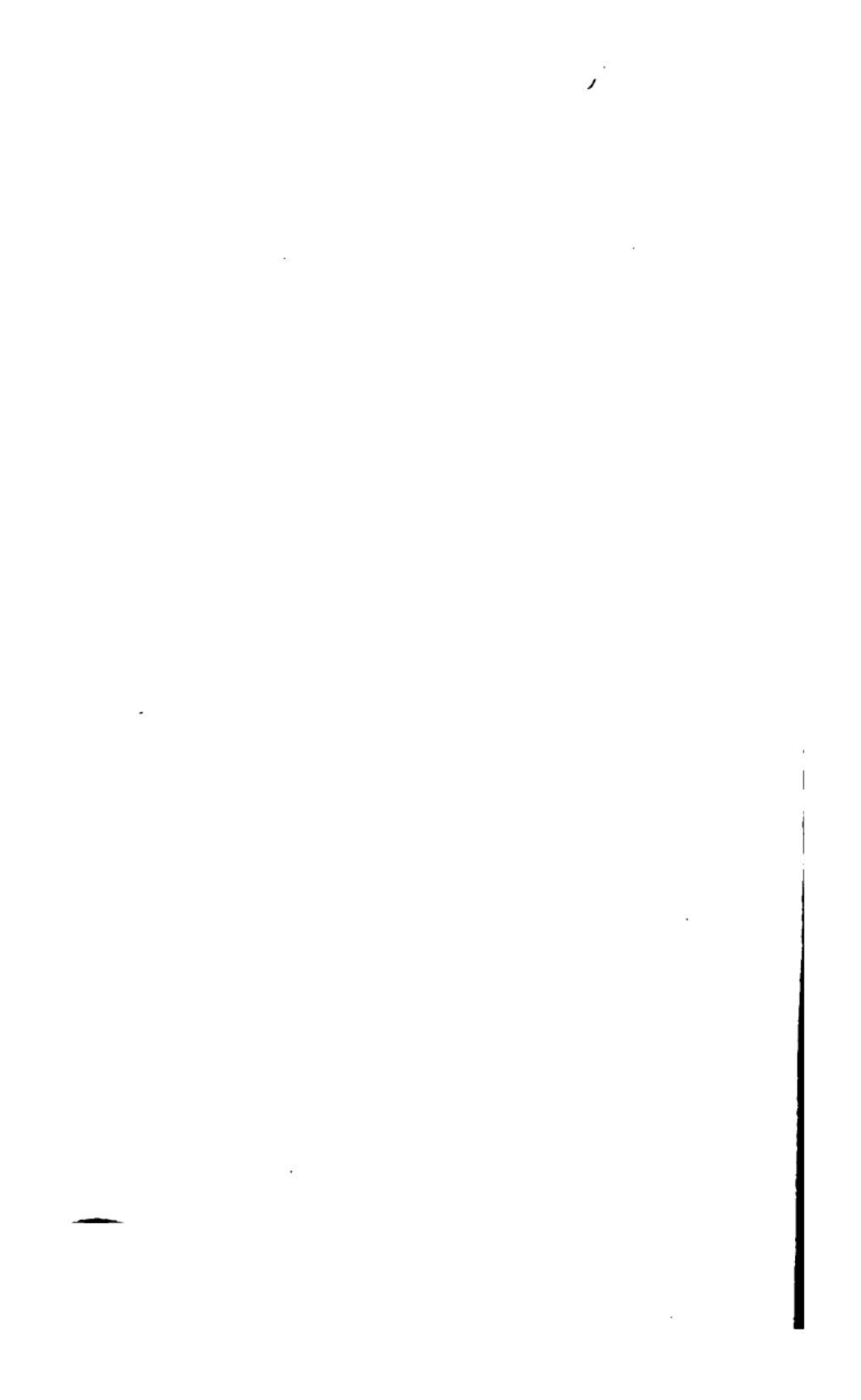
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O F
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In FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II. PART. II.



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A N E C D O T E S

OF

POLITE LITERATURE.

VOLUME II. PART II.

S E C T. II. continued.

Of Satire.

6. **O**NE judges as the weather dictates; right
A poem is at noon, and wrong at night;
Another judges by a surer gage,
An author's principles, or parentage;
Since his great ancestors in Flanders fell,
The poem doubtless must be written well.
Another judges by the writer's look,
Another judges *for he bought the book*;
Some judge, their knack of judging wrong to keep;
Some judge because it is too soon to sleep. †

* Sat. 2.

† Sat. 3.

VOL. II. PART II. B This

This is an excellent ridicule on the generality of trifling critics ; the principles of their several judgments are humorously satirized, and with great justness.† Such critics as Dr. Young here mentions, are among the number of those who bring certain taunts and reflections on criticism in general ; a species of literature extremely useful, and comprehending every part of polite learning. The ridicule of injudicious and malevolent critics is reasonable ; but the ridicule of criticism itself is absurd. Critics, however learned, ought to present their opinions to the world with diffidence, especi-

† The celebrated Rousseau treats criticism itself as lightly as the Doctor does the critics ; *La critique elle-même, dont on fait tant de bruit, n'est qu'un art de conjecturer ; l'art de choisir entre plusieurs mensonges, celui qui ressemble le mieux à la vérité.* *Emile, tome ii. p. 277.*
ally

ally if they employ themselves in pointing out the errors in works of genius ; but if instead of modesty they display a haughty insolence of decision, their wretched pretensions should be defeated, and every shaft of ridicule pointed at such proper objects.

The use of true criticism cannot be disputed ; for every ingenuous reader will own, that there is great pleasure in seeing the latent beauties of an author brought to light : how much has every admirer of fine poetry been obliged to Mr. Addison, for the new and manly remarks he made on the Paradise Lost, a book in the hands of but few people before his criticisms appeared ? When Scaliger wrote his poetics in praise of Virgil, he acted in a different manner, and attempted to raise his favourite's reputa-

tion on the remains of a still greater poet : he did not endeavour to make Virgil's beauties shine in their own native light, but by casting the foulest abuse on Homer, and ridiculing that greatest of poets in an awkward inelegant manner. But Scaliger gained no reputation by the attempt; but, on the contrary, every sensible unprejudiced man despised him for his insolence and weakness.

Violent panegyric is as opposite to the true spirit of criticism as insolent abuse : it ought always to aim at setting an author's beauties in their *true* light ; nor should it conceal, or totally overlook his defects ; but when they are pointed out, it should not be malevolence, but candour.

It

It has been thought that the critic has no business to undeceive the world, if they take defects for beauties: but I cannot be of this opinion; he ought to establish the fame of every author on truth and his real deserts, but not let his reputation depend on the mistakes of his readers: faults are undoubtedly his province as well as beauties. The one, however, may be explained with the warmth of admiration, the other mentioned with tenderness and caution *.

The criticisms which are wrote on the works of authors living at the time they are published, ought, above all others, to be composed with the greatest candour and love of truth: if defects are to be

* La modestie, qui sied si bien en toute sorte d'écrits, est essentielle à ceux de ce genre; *Oeuvres de M. L'Abbé de Saint Real*, tom. iv. p. 242.

pointed out, it should be done tenderly, and with that love of sincerity which softens the decisions of the critic, who may, perhaps, blast at once a young reputation. Many authors have in their younger days produced very indifferent pieces, whose after productions have been an honour to their age and nation. Periodical criticisms have been most wanting in this tenderness; the authors of such works, accustomed to make free with the indifferent productions which come before them, soon lose all sense of caution, and forgetting that the authors of such works are living, treat them with a severity, cruel in itself, and sometimes unhappy in its consequences.

In England we have not had such periodical criticisms many years; but in France,

France, Holland and Germany, they have been regularly published near a century.

John Gallois, a very learned Frenchman, is now memorable chiefly for having been the first who published the *Journal des Scavans*, in conjunction with Monsieur de Sallo, who had formed the design of this work. The first Journal was published on the fifth of January 1665: but these gentlemen played the critics so rigorously, and censured the new books with so much freedom and severity, that the whole tribe of authors rose up against their works, and effectually cried it down. De Sallo abandoned entirely, after having published a third Journal on the 30th of March, 1665. Gallois was determined to continue it; yet did not venture to send out a fourth Journal till the fourth of January 1666,

and then not without a most humble advertisement in the beginning of it, wherein is declared, that the author “ will not presume to criticise, but only simply to give an account of books.” This, and the protection shewn by the minister Colbert, who was greatly taken with the work, gradually reconciled the public to what it at first was extremely prejudiced against. And thus began Literary Journals, which have been continued from that time to this under various titles, and by various authors; among whom are the illustrious names of Bayle and Le Clerc. Gallois continued his Journal till the year 1674; when his more important occupations obliged him to drop it, or rather to turn it over to somebody else.

Of late years the literary journals abroad have possessed a much greater reputation than any that have been in England. The *Journal des Scavans* meets, at this day, with a very good reception in most parts of Europe; and the *Mercurie de France* (if it may properly be called a literary journal) has always been composed by men whose other works have gained them a great reputation (academicians:) M. de Place now conducts it, he succeeded de Marmontel, whose *Contes Moraux*, and other pieces, are so well known.

It were to be wished that as we have Journals and Reviews in England, and they are likely always to continue, they were conducted by men of character and reputation, in an open manner, and particularly

larly that they were not the mere schemes of booksellers to make money, as it is well known our two Reviews are. The booksellers who print them have the sole appointment of the authors who compose them, and most of the articles in them are paid for by the sheet: their criticisms are the strongest proof of their abilities and candour; it is to be regretted that any but men of reputation should be employed in such compositions. It would be malignity to deny their containing some articles that are wrote with spirit, candour, and even elegance; but there are so many articles composed with a total want of these, such short malevolent criticisms, without quotations, that the reading them is disgusting to a person of any taste. *

* Whenever a piece is beneath criticism, it would be much better to omit mentioning it, than treat even

It has been often disputed, whether reviews, journals, magazines, dictionaries, and such like compilations, are of any service in promoting literature: I should apprehend they may spread a superficial knowledge among the lower class of the people, but cannot be of any real utility. Our dictionaries for all arts and sciences, says a French author, the bibliothèques, the journals, which are becoming more numerous every year under new forms, and an hundred other books of the same kind, which by facilitating the means of appearing learned, make us slight and overlook the course that ought to be followed in order to become really so, are perhaps the fore-runners of the down-even a dull author with language that ought never to be used in criticism, or indeed in any composition.

fal of learning.* Not but that some of those works are good in their kind, and would be very useful, if we knew how to restrict the use of them to their true purpose ; but from an abuse which becomes more general every day, they are taken for the boundary where we may stop our course, while they are at best but the roads that conduct us to it. I say nothing of an infinite number of writings, of which the least mischievous, are those censured only for being trifling, and of which some will for ever be the disgrace of reason and morals, the pernicious fruits of the corruption of taste, which necessarily draws along with it the downfall of literature ; for a depravity of morals affects that of taste more nearly than is generally imagined.

* Hist. Roy. Acad. Jus. & B. Lett. tom. 16.

But

But to return more immediately to the subject : that true and genuine taste which is the foundation for just criticism, is in the possession of but few : and I am persuaded that the generality of men are more led by the judgment of men of learning and taste, than some may imagine : the multitude are wretched judges of works of genius; and if the opinion of particular men was not very much regarded, we should not see the true merit of almost every author (who has been dead several years) so well known. It is true, the bulk of readers make a tolerable judgment enough upon works of wit, taken in the gross ; but then they judge wretchedly upon the detail ; and whilst a majority among them shall agree to say, a work is good upon the whole; there shall not be any agreement in their judgments upon the several parts of it,
upon

upon this or that particular passage in it.*

The judgment of the multitude ~~on~~ new books resembles, in some measure, that of the Greeks on a statue of Phidias. Alcamenes and he were commanded to make each a statue of Minerva, that the most beautiful of the two might be placed upon a very high pillar. The statues were made, and exposed to the judgment of the publick. The Minerva of Alcamenes appeared exceeding beautiful, when it was seen near, and was preferred by the universal voice to all the rest. The Minerva of Phidias, on the contrary, at so little a distance from the eye, seemed hideous ; it had a large gaping mouth, nostrils which appeared to

Trublet.

shrink

shrink and be drawn back ; and had I known not what coarseness of features in the face : Phidias was laughed at, and his work despised. *Place it*, said he, *where it is designed to be put* : they did : and the admired statue of Alcamenes appeared nothing at all : whereas that of Phidias struck with an air of grandeur and majesty, that they could not enough gaze at and admire. Upon which the approbation was given maturely to Phidias, which his rival had surprised ; and the poor Alcamenes retired ashamed and confounded : not but Alcamenes was an excellent sculptor, but he was not acquainted with the rules of opticks. In like manner our tribe of little critics and readers want somebody to point out in what light they should consider many books.

As much as the philosophical spirit has been ridiculed, it is the grand foundation on which the fabric of criticism ought to be reared. It is a talent acquired by labour, art, and long habit, and enables us to judge correctly of every thing in the world.*—It is an understanding which overlooks nothing; an union of just reasonings that nothing can overturn; a sure and judicious taste of whatever is excellent or vicious in nature. It is the sole rule of the true and the beautiful; nothing then is perfect in the different productions of genius, but what is animated by this spirit; upon it particularly depends the glory of the Belles Lettres. However, as this rare talent is the fruit of consummate learning, and falls to the share of very few learned men, it is neither possible nor ne-

* See M. de la Nauze.

cessary

cessary for the success of letters, that all who cultivate them should be possessed of it. It is enough for a nation that certain great geniuses possess it, and that the superiority of their knowledge renders them the arbiters of taste, the oracles of criticism, and the dispensers of literary glory. The philosophic spirit will properly reside in that small number, but it will diffuse its influences in a manner over the whole body of the state, over all the arts, over all professions, over works of genius of every kind, and principally over those of literature. *L'Esprit Philosophique*, says the Abbé du Bos, qui n'est autre chose que la raison fortifiée par la réflexion & par l'expérience, & dont le nom seul auroit été nouveau pour les anciens, est excellent pour mettre en évidence celles qu'aura faites un auteur.*

* Tom. ii. p. 270.

It is an old maxim, that a poem should be judged with the same spirit that the author wrote, and a true one : the truly fine poetry ought rather to be felt by its effects, than tried by the judgment : it ought to make its way immediately to the heart to master our passions, rather than be faultless to our reason.*

Criticising poems by rule only must necessarily give a wretched idea of them,

* 'Tis thus, says he, speaking of technical judgments, the greatest part of our poets would examine the Cid, if this piece were new. Painters and poets who have no enthusiasm do not feel that of others, and giving their suffrages by way of discussion, they commend or censure a work in general, and define it to be good or bad, according as they find it regular in their analysis. How can they be good judges of the whole, when they are bad ones of the invention, a part which constitutes the principal merit of works, and distinguishes the great genius from the simple artist ?

since

since a work may be composed with the greatest exactness, and in conformity to almost every critical maxim, and yet be a poor cold performance. The exact writers, with all their correctness, have no strokes worthy of applause ; but true genius, amidst its mistakes, shews something deserving of commendation.* It is not an exemption from faults that constitutes the merit of a poem, but the number and price of the beauties ; and a piece which contains no great number of them, but admirable in those it does, ought always to be preferred to one of a continued elegance, without those noble strokes of poetry. Les Lecteurs, says Trublet, ordinaires préfèrent les ouvrages d'une beauté continüe, quoique médiocres, à ceux d'une plus grande beauté,

* Sed & his non labentibus nulla laus, illis nonnulla laus etiam si labantur. Plin. Epist.

mais moins soutenue, sur-tout si elle est interrompue par des défauts considérables. Les gens du métier, plus faits à la peine & à la fatigue ; & les gens de goût, plus sensibles à la grande beauté, lisent volontiers tout un livre pour un petit nombre de traits d'un certain prix. Ils présent les beautés plus qu'ils ne les comptent.*

There

* *Essais sur divers sujets de literature, &c.*
tome iii. p. 109.

The same author, in another place, draw a distinction between the men who think much in their works, and men of fire and imagination ; if he means in poetry, I should think he was mistaken, since those great poets who have displayed most the fire of imagination, have also been most celebrated for their thoughts. If he means metaphysical or mathematical writers, it may perhaps be the case. His words are,—*Les ouvrages de vivacité, de gaïté, & de ce qu'on appelle communément*

There is nothing which oftener misleads the judgment of numbers, than the *name* of an author. If a poet of reputation publishes a piece far beneath the rest of his works, many critics and others are apt to praise it much more than it deserves, as they think the author's name justifies such random panegyricks ; and to a man of mean parts, it is rather a hazardous undertaking to criticise the faults of a great writer : yet the greatest sometimes compose works unworthy of

nément imagination, ne sont pas d'ordinaire les plus *pensees*. Un écrivain qui pense beaucoup, un grand esprit, est souvent un homme froid & sérieux. Ces grands *penseurs* ne sont bien goutés que par leurs pareils. Les auteurs d'imagination & de sentiment sont plus a la portée de tout le monde.

Essais sur divers sujets de littérature, &c.
tome iv. p. 54.

them ; and like many of the celebrated painters, produce pieces which are exceeded by artists of much shallower parts.

Thus Carlo Maratt, in some small pieces of a virgin and child, may be reckoned equal even to Raphael himself : Annibal Carrache made a remarkable distinction between two celebrated painters.

When Guido and Dominichino had finished each their picture, in a small church built in the garden of the monastery of St. Gregory on Mount Cælius, and dedicated to St. Andrew, Annibal Caracche, their master, was pressed to decide which of those two pupils deserved the prize. Guido's piece represents St. Andrew kneeling before the cross ;

cross; and that of Dominichino exhibits the flagellation of this apostle.* These were grand subjects, on which our two antagonists had a very spacious field for displaying their talents; and they executed their pieces with so much the more care, as being painted in fresco, one opposite to the other, they were to continue eternal rivals, and to perpetuate, as it were, the competition of their masters. Guido, said Carrache, has performed like a master, and Dominichino as an apprentice; but, continued he, the apprentice is superior to his master. We see, indeed, some faults in Dominichino's piece, which do not occur in Guido's; but we meet there also with some touches, which are not to be seen in his rival's. There we perceive a spirit which aimed

* Dominichino has repeated this very subject at St. Andrea della valle.

at beauties, to which Guido's soft and tranquil genius had no thoughts of aspiring.

Criticism, like most other branches of literature, may be of too luxuriant a growth, when a certain critical spirit expands itself among all ranks of people, and the most illiterate set up for judges of the Belles Lettres: one bad consequence of this prevalent taste, is the vast multitude of new rules of criticism, which are dictated for the guidance of authors, in every species of composition. Critics, after reading the works of the poets, draw from them such a variety of maxims, that, without hazarding any bold assertion, I may safely say, a work would be a very poor one, composed with strict obedience to them. We have long seen the truth of this assertion in tragedy.

How

How many new ones are there, spiritless, insipid, and utterly devoid of genius, but exact and faultless as to the rules of writing. The modern French wits, (or pretenders) says Sir William Temple, have been very severe in their censures, and exact in their rules, I think to very little purpose. The truth is, there is something in the genius of poetry too libertine to be confined to so many rules ; and whoever goes about to subject it to such constraints, loses both its spirit and grace, which are ever native, and never learnt, even of the best masters.*

Extremes, however, in composition, as in morals, are ever dangerous, and the author, who, despising all rules, indulges himself in the reveries of romantic in-

* Of Poetry. See his Works, vol. i. p. 238. folio edit.

clination,

clination, unless he produces a very admirable work indeed, will scarce meet with the lasting applause of those great authors, whose works formed the basis of criticism itself. A piece wrote in a lively manner, which sets all method at defiance, will undoubtedly take vastly with the publick, as a man of any genius may strike out something which has not been hackneyed by the multitude of authors ; but a work of this nature, however it may succeed at first, will scarcely obtain a lasting possession of fame.

The greatest part of the pieces that are highest in the public esteem at this time, have arrived to this fortune gradually. Too bold a success at first is but a bad omen of what is to come after, and frequently proves nothing but the indifference of the performance. The beauties that

that are to the level of all capacities, have soon done their business, while the grand beauties of all are sometimes less striking ; and it is seldom that a work of the first merit immediately gains the majority. The public approbation is never more constant, than when it is for a time suspended.*

* La plupart des ouvrages que le public estime le plus aujourd'hui, ne sont parvenus que par degrés à cette approbation universelle. Un succès trop brillant dans les commencemens, est un mauvais préjugé pour la suite, & ne prouve souvent que la médiocrité d'un ouvrage. Des beautés qui sont à la portée de tout le monde, ont bientôt fait leur impression. De grandes beautés sont quelque fois moins frappantes ; & il est rare qu'un ouvrage du premier mérite obtienne d'abord les suffrages du grand nombre, l'estime du public n'est jamais plus constante, que lorsqu'elle s'est fait attendre quelque tems.

Essais par Trublet, tome ii. p. 58.

I ap-

I apprehend the celebrated romance of Tristram Shandy may be ranked in this class of works: never piece made more noise for a time, or occasioned a greater number of imitations. Its success was too lively at first to hold; and ever since the first appearance it has gradually declined in reputation: men of sense and taste now regard it as a trifling book, which contains several very good strokes of wit and humour, and will serve to laugh at for half an hour; but it is not now compared to Don Quixote. The novelty of the performance made many overlook the indecency, which is too often met with in it; but now the merit of every chapter in it is weighed more justly, and we find, if there are many very laughable strokes in it, there are also many other indecent, and some even heavy; in a word, it is one of those upstart

start books which blaze a while and then are forgot ; and I am fully persuaded that a few years will bury Tristram Shandy in oblivion.

As to the time at which works of genius generally arrive at their real and merited esteem, there are, as usual, more opinions than one concerning it. I think the Abbé Trublet's a sensible one. If we consult experience, says he, it may be said, that good works are commonly rated at their just value, in the age immediately ensuing that of their author. Succeeding ages do not usually make so true a judgement upon them, because they judge too favourably. The reputation of good works always gathers in its passage, which, perhaps, is less a proof of the excellency of the works themselves, than an effect of that disposition

there

there is in most men to admire antiquity. It is natural, that the public esteem for a good work should still be growing up, to the instant that it is surpassed by another of the same kind. Every day that passes, without producing some performance equal or superior to that which is in possession of the public esteem, ought to confirm it in that possession, because it proves still more and more the scarcity of those talents, which the first work discovers its author to have been master of.

7. Health chiefly keeps an atheist in the dark,
 A fever argues better than a Clarke:
 Let but the logic in his pulse decay,
 The Grecian he'll renounce, and learn to pray.*

I cannot help here quoting an excellent passage out of the Spectator against athe-

* Sat. 4.

ism,

ism, especially as it consists entirely of cool argument, and is directed merely to the understanding.—“ I shall in this paper endeavour to evince that there are grounds to expect a future state, without supposing in the reader any faith at all, not even the belief of a Deity. Let the most stedfast unbeliever open his eyes, and take a survey of the sensible world, and then say, if there be not a connection, an adjustment, an exact and constant order, discoverable in all the parts of it : whatever be the cause, the thing itself is evident to all our faculties. Look into the animal system, the passions, senses, and locomotive powers; is not the contrivance and propriety observable in these too ? Are they not fitted to certain ends, and are they not by nature directed to proper objects ? It is impossible then that the smallest

smallest bodies should, by a management superior to the wit of man, be disposed in the most excellent manner agreeable to their respective natures ; and yet the spirits or souls of men be neglected, or managed by such rules, as fall short of man's understanding ? Shall every other passion be rightly placed by nature, and shall that appetite for immortality, natural to all mankind, be alone misplaced, or designed to be frustrated ! Shall the industrious application of the inferior animal powers in the meanest vocations, be answered by the ends we propose, and shall not the generous efforts of a virtuous mind be rewarded ? In a word ; shall the corporeal world be all order and harmony, the intellectual, discord and confusion ? He who is bigot enough to believe these things, must

must bid adieu to the natural rule of reasoning analogy, must run counter to that maxim of common sense, that men ought to form their judgments of things unexperienced from what they have experienced.—There is one consideration which the atheists could never yet get over: the greatest and most eminent persons of all ages have been against them, and always complied with the public forms of worship established in their respective countries, when there was nothing in them either derogatory to the honour of the supreme Being, or prejudicial to the good of mankind. The Platos and Ciceros among the ancients, the Bacons, the Boyles, and Lockes among our own countrymen, are all instances of what I have been saying; not to mention any of the divines, however celebrated, since our adversaries chal-

lenge all those, as men who have too much interest in this case to be impartial evidences.

How amazing is it to reflect on the disbelief of a future state, in minds of a heroic cast ! The present king of Prussia, in several of his poems, absolutely asserts the annihilation of the soul. It is inconceivable that so great a man should be deaf to the voice of reason only in matters relating to religion.

8. What's female beauty but an air divine,
Thro' which the mind's all gentle graces shine ?
They like the sun irradiate all between ;
The body charms, because the soul is seen.
Hence men are often captives of a face,
They know not why, of no peculiar grace.
Some forms tho' bright no mortal man can bear,
Some none resists, tho' not exceeding fair.*

* Sat. 6.

The

The idea of beauty has always remained vague and undefined; every mind receives a different impression from the sight of it, and form different opinions concerning the occasion of it. As there never was an exact standard of perfection in beauty, the notions must be entirely comparative and relative. A man, on the first sight of an object, pronounces whether he thinks it beautiful, or the contrary: but the idea shall vary in every person that beholds it; few will be able to assign any positive reason, for their calling another person beautiful; ask them whether the charm lies in any particular feature, in the complexion, or the shape and the general symmetry of the body, they will very possibly answer, that they see nothing beautiful in these, considered separately; so that we may very reasonably conclude beauty to be an inex-

pressible something diffused over the whole person, that is adapted by a kind of silent attraction to please particular people. "When an ugly woman is beloved, says Bruyere, it must certainly be very desperately ; for either it must proceed from a strange weakness in her lover, or from some more secret and forcible charms than those of beauty*." I cannot help here adding what Mr. Addison says of beauty, as the passage itself is extremely beautiful. "There is nothing, says he, that makes its way more directly to the soul than beauty, which immediately diffuses a secret satisfaction and complacency through the imagination, and gives a finishing to any thing that is great or uncommon. The very first discovery of it strikes the

* Characters, or Manners of the Age, v. 1. p. 112.
mind

mind with an inward joy, and spreads a cheerfulness and delight through all its faculties. There is not perhaps any real beauty or deformity more in one piece of matter than another, because we might have been so made that whatever now appears loathsome to us, might have shown itself agreeable ; but we find by experience that there are several modifications of matter, which the mind, without any previous consideration, pronounces at first beautiful or deformed."*

Dr. Burk has given us a philosophical and natural description of beauty : his words are as follows, " Having endeavoured to shew what beauty is not, it remains that we should examine, at least, with equal attention, in what it really consists ; for beauty is a thing much too

* *Sectator*, vol. vi. Numb. 412.

affecting not to depend on some positive qualities. Now, certainly, since it is no creature of our reason, since it strikes us without any reference to use, and even where no use at all can be discerned, since the order and method of nature is generally very different from our measures and proportions, we must conclude, that beauty is, for the greater part, some merely sensible quality, acting mechanically upon the human mind, by the intervention of the senses". He soon after draws a parallel between the sublime and beautiful, as follows : " Sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small ; beauty should be smoothed and polished ; the great, rugged and negligent ; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly ; the great, in many cases, loves the right line, and when it deviates,

deviates, it often makes a strong deviation : beauty should not be obscure ; the great ought to be dark and gloomy ; beauty should be light and delicate ; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are, indeed, ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure ; and, however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions.*”

The antient painters and sculptors exhausted all their ideas of perfect beauty in their pictures and statues of Venus. They made her always appear with the

* A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, p. 95, 115.

vaileft variety of graces imaginable. "She has in general, says Mr. Spence *; one of the prettiest, as Minerva has sometimes one of the handsomest faces that can be conceived. Her look, as she is represented by the antient artists and poets, has all the taking airs, wantonness, and graces, that they could give it. Her shape is the most exact and elegant imaginable; all soft, and full of tenderness. The fineness of her skin, and the beauty of her complexion, were so exquisite, that it was the master-piece even of Apelles to express it as it ought to be. Her eyes were either wanton or quick, or languishing, or insolent, according to the occasion; and her face and all her air agreed with them. She is very frequently described too, as having a treacherous insulting smile on her face. But however she appears, or

whatever she is doing, every thing about her, and every little motion of her, is all graceful, and bewitching, and charming. In the Venus of Medici *, either

* This statue formerly stood in the Medicis palace on Mount Pincio at Rome, from whence it was brought to Florence by order of Duke Cosmo the Third. The mismanagement in the packing up and carriage was such, that the hips, legs, and arms of the Venus were broken off by the way ; however, they have been replaced, and joined with so much art, that it must be a very inquisitive eye that can discover the least trace of that misfortune. The inscription on the base shews it to be the work of Cleomenes, an Athenian, the son of Apollodorus ; yet among all the remains of antiquity, this is the only place where we meet with the name of this great master. The pedestal is modern, and between two and three feet high ; and as the statue seems to lean a little forward, some connoisseurs think that it was originally designed for an elevated position ; but this inference is of no great certainty.

Keyler's Travels, vol. ii. p. 28.
the

the general tenderness and fine proportions of her whole make, seen thus all at once, take a great deal from the beauty of her face, or the head is really (as has been suspected by some) not of the same artist, who made the body. As to the latter, it will ever be the standard of all female beauty and softness. When one looks on it, one is apt to make the same exclamation with the servant in Plautus. One might very well wish him too insist particularly on the beauty of the breasts, which in the statue itself are the finest that can be conceived. They are small, distinct, and delicate to the highest degree ; with an idea of softness much beyond what any one can conceive, that has not seen the original ; for all copies do her an injury, and prints more particularly ; and yet with all that softness, they have a firmness

ness too. From her breast, her shape begins to diminish gradually down to her waist, which I remember to have heard an English lady at Florence criticising at first sight, as not fine and taper enough. This probably proceeded from our beauties in England carrying this nicety generally too far ; as some of the Grecian beauties did formerly too at Athens. And I am the more persuaded that this was the case, because the same lady (who one would think should be a good judge of beauty, because it is what she must see, at least, every time she looks in her glass) after having seen the Venus of Medici several times, had the grace to own herself in the wrong, and even to exclaim against the excess of this mode among us. The Venus of Medici, with all her fineness of shape, has what the Romans call *corpus solidum*, and the

French

French, the *embonpoint* (I do not know that we have any right word for it in English) and her waist in particular is not represented as slimmed by art, but as exactly proportioned by nature to all the other parts of her body. Venus, in all attitudes, is graceful ; but in no one more than in that of the Venus of Medici ; in which figure of her, if she is not really modest, she at least counterfeits modesty extremely. Were one to describe exactly what that attitude is, one might do it in two verses of Ovid's.

Ipsa Venus pubem, quoties velamina ponit,
Protegitur læva semireducta manu.

There is a tenderness and elegance, in all the rest of her form, as well as in the parts I have mentioned. Her legs are neat and slender ; the small of them is

is finely rounded ; and her very feet are little, white, and pretty.

In her attitude she seems with modesty to withdraw herself from the beholder's eye : the right knee advances a little forward, the left hand is placed a little before the pudenda, and the right across her breasts ; yet without touching the body. The head inclines a little to the left shoulder ; the bloom of youth, the pleasing softness of her look, and her beauty and modesty, seem to rival each other in the charms of her countenance. Her person is somewhat plump, and the flesh is so admirably executed, that one imagines it so soft, that it must yield to the touch. Here indeed the statuary's skill is not a little aided by the polish of the marble, which at first was of a pure white, but time has given it a yellowness :

ness : however, it does not yet look amiss ; and in the sun-shine is almost transparent : Her hair at present is brown, and this possibly may be no more than faded gilding.

Amidst the admiration of all ages, and the resort of curious persons to see it, the Venus of Medicis has not escaped censure. Most connoisseurs agree, that the head is rather too small in proportion to the other parts of the body, and particularly the hips ; some find fault with the largeness of the nose, possibly the partition along the vertebræ of the back is a little too deep, considering the object is a soft plump female ; at least the bend of the arms, and the inclination of the upper part of the body, seems to lessen, if not totally, to prevent so deep a partition. The fingers are of an extraordinary

Binary length, and all, excepting the little finger on the right hand, without joints ; but it is manifest that the hands had not yet undergone the artist's last touches, and consequently this should not affect his reputation. The same observation possibly might be made on the fish or dolphin at the side of the statue, on which some boys seem to be riding, were it not known that many of the admirable pieces of antiquity excel only in their capital parts, the judicious master slurring over the concomitant ornaments, as not deserving much time and attention. Mr. Richardson has also observed the same defect and difference of work, in the little children of the river Nile, in the Vatican Belvidera ; in the wild boar's head, belonging to the statue of Meleager, in the Palazzo di Picchini at Rome ; in the beasts, with the

the Toro Farnese, at Rome ; in the child Commodus's arms, in the Farnesian palace ; and in Læda, in a group with Castor and Pollux, in the duke of Bracciano's palace at Rome. The original of the Greek medals of the Syrian kings and the Ptolemys, were engraved in the same manner, nothing being finer than the heads ; whereas the reverses seem to be done by an unexperienced hand. To conclude my account of this celebrated Venus, with the judgment of some connoisseurs, they allow, that, in comparing the parts separately, as the head, the nose, &c. of this statue, with those of others, the similar parts might be found even of superior workmanship ; but that for such a combination of beauties, the delicacy of shape, and attitude, and symmetry of the whole, the world doth not afford its equal. This incomparable statue

statue stands between two others of the same goddess, which, in any other place, would pass for admirable pieces; whereas here they serve rather as foils to the Venus of Medicis, only increasing the admiration of it, while their own excellencies are quite unnoticed. That on her right is twice as big, with the golden apple in her hand, and is termed Venus Victrix Victoriosa; the other, a noble statue, by Hercules Ferrata, is distinguished by the name of Venus Urania.

Nor was it only in the statues of the Greeks that Venus was so admirably displayed; Apelles drew her inimitably.

The most celebrated picture in all antiquity, was that of the sea Venus, as she was called by the Romans, or the Venus Anadyomené, as she was called by the Greeks.

Greeks. Some say, that in drawing it he used Campaspe for his model ; that favourite mistress of his, who was given him so generously by Alexander the Great.* This picture came afterwards into

* Alexander gave Apelles a remarkable proof of his regard ; for when he employed him to draw Compassion, having found that he had conceived an affection for her, he resigned her to him. This prince went often to see Apelles when at work ; and one day, when he was overlooking him, we are told, that he talked so absurdly in regard to painting, that Apelles desired him to hold his tongue, telling him, that the very boys who mixed the colours laughed at him. Mr. Freinsheimius, however, thinks it incredible that Apelles would make use of such an expression to Alexander ; or that the latter, who had so good an education, and so fine a genius, would talk so impertinently of painting : nor is it likely, perhaps, that Apelles would have expressed himself to this prince in the manner which he is reported to have done, upon another occasion. Alexander, as we are told, having seen his

into the hands of the Romans, and was probably for some time in that noble collection

his picture drawn by Apelles, did not commend it so much as it deserved ; a little after, a horse happened to be brought, which neighed at sight of the horse painted in the same picture : upon this Apelles is said to have told Alexander, "Sir, it is plain this horse understands painting better than your majesty." One of Apelles's chief excellencies was his making his pictures so exactly resemble the persons represented, insomuch that the physiognomists are said to have been able to form a judgment as readily from his portraits, as if they had seen the originals. His readiness and dexterity at taking a likeness was of great service to him, in extricating him from a difficulty in which he was involved at the court of Ægypt : he had not the good fortune to be in favour with Ptolemy ; a storm forced him, however, to take shelter at Alexandria, during the reign of this prince : a mischievous fellow, in order to do him a disservice, went to him, and, in the king's name, invited him to dinner. Apelles went, and seeing

collection in the palace of Augustus, though it was afterwards placed by that emperor in the temple, which he dedicated to his predecessor Julius. It was quite faded and run to decay in Pliny's time; but though the original has been so long lost, we may still see several strokes that were copied from it, in the writings of the Roman authors who enjoyed the sight of it, and who have marked out some of its beauties for us, even in their prose as well as their verse writings. You see her in them as just

the king in a prodigious passion, told him, by way of excuse, that he should not have come to his table but by his orders. He was commanded to shew the man who had invited him: this was impossible, the person who had put the trick upon him not being present. Apelles, however, drew a sketch of his picture upon the wall with a coal, the first lines of which discovered him immediately to Ptolemy.

born

born from the sea ; complete at once in her form ; all her beauties fresh about her, and with her body as still wet and humid, from the waves that produced her in all this perfection. Some of these passages are so strong, that I am thoroughly persuaded they might have gone a great way towards helping some painter of an extraordinary genius (such, for instance, as Raphael or Correggio) to have restored the lost beauty of Apelles to the world : and perhaps Titian had considered some of them pretty thoroughly before he drew that beautiful Venus of his, with her wet hair and humid body, which is at present in the duke of Orleans's collection at Paris.*

On the whole, I think the greatest excellency of Dr. Young's satires, is the

* Polymetis, p. 219.

morality that breathes throughout them : indeed they contain sprightly passages that cannot but please a reader of taste ; but are entirely deficient in true and genuine poetry. *The man of Rhymes* may rail at the vices and foibles of the age ; but it requires a poetic imagination to adorn the satirical page with delicacy of humour, flights of fancy, and strokes of genuine and sublime poetry.

Of all the satirical poets that have lately appeared, none have been more conspicuous than the Reverend Mr. C. Churchill. A man seldom attracts the notice of a whole kingdom, without some very well-founded pretensions to merit. The merit of a *man* shines only in a small compass ; but that of a *poet* illuminates a much larger hemisphere. This gentleman's satires are very remarkable ;
I know

I know none that are wrote in such a peculiar vein, either antient or modern. The versification is beautifully harmonious, the satiric strokes are poignant to the last degree, and there appears a certain nervous boldness of expression, which charms a reader of any imagination. Here and there we perceive a happy talent for satiric description. In short, I shall not hesitate in asserting, that I know no poet since Pope, who has showed greater abilities in this species of composition, but many have applied their talents rather better.

The first of his poems was the Rosciad, on a most popular, though temporary subject: it displayed at once the author's abilities, and the world was amazed when it was known that Mr. Churchill was no young versifier, but had

passed the commonly luxurious days of
 imagination, when the fancy riots at the
 expence of judgment. It was very re-
 markable that such talents should have
 laid dormant, and not before have broke
 forth in some poetic flights. The compo-
 sition of this poem can be tried by no
 rules, for it is wrote on no plan. From
 the title we might expect some *design*,
 but it is a rambling affair, which bears
 rather the appearance of a general satire
 on the actors, &c. than a little regular
 poem: however, what it wants in plan,
 is fully repaid in versification, which is
 really very beautiful, and the ridicule
 excessively severe. It certainly was a
 cruel scheme to satirize a whole set of
 men, whose only employment is the
 amusement of the town: can it be ex-
 pected that the inferior players should be
 Garricks and Cibbers? Far from it; nor
 ought

Ought any man, in common humanity, so ridicule their want of genius with such poignancy as to make them the jest of the whole kingdom. The late duke of Grafton entertained very proper sentiments of this point. Mr. F---z---k, a gentleman of fortune, having some slight quarrel with Mr. Garrick, revenged it in a public manner, by hissing him violently, when the whole house was silent, and even complained to the duke as Lord Chamberlain, that Mr. Garrick had used him ill, desiring that he would interpose his authority. "Really, Mr. F." replied his grace, "I cannot think you have any reason to make me complaints, for you yourself confess you have often hissed Mr. Garrick when on the stage, which, let me tell you, Sir, is a very unlawful act, and much too great a revenge for any such quarrels." However, as he could not

not effect his design with the duke, he began a very illiberal abusive criticism on that great actor, in the Craftsman, under the title of X. Y. Z. Mr. Garrick bore it very patiently for some time, and revenged himself very severely in the Fribbleriad, wherein Mr. F. is ridiculed with a great deal of humour.*

It

* Mr. Churchill, in a late edition of the Rosciad, draws a satirical character of him in a most admirable manner :

With that low cunning, which in fools supplies,
And amply too, the place of being wise,
Which Nature, kind indulgent parent gave
To qualify the blockhead for a knave ;
With that smooth falsehood, whose appearance
charms,
And reason of each wholesome doubt disarms,
Which to the lowest depths of guile descends,
By vilest means pursues the vilest ends,

Wears

It must be confessed Mr. Churchill's criticisms are extremely just, and display not a little judgment; but nevertheless it is

Wear's friendship's mask for purposes of spite,
 Fawns in the day, and butchers in the night;
 With that malignant envy, which turns pale,
 And sickens, even if a friend prevail,
 Which merit and success pursues with hate,
 And damns the worth it cannot imitate;
 With the cold caution of a coward's spleen,
 Which fears not guilt, but always seeks a screen,
 Which keeps this maxim ever in her view—
 What's basely done, should be done safely too;
 With that dull, rooted, callous impudence,
 Which, dead to shame, and ev'ry nicer sense,
 Ne'er blush'd, unless, in spreading Vice's snares,
 She blunder'd on some virtue unawares;
 With all these blessings, which we seldom find
 Lavish'd by Nature on one happy mind,
 A motley figure, of the fribble tribe,
 Which heart can scarce conceive, or pen describe,
 Came simp'ring on; to ascertain whose sex
 Twelve sage impanell'd matrons would perplex,
 Nor

is a most inhuman design to satirize them with such severity. The following satirical character of Dr. Hill has humour in it, but does not pay a just tribute to his abilities as a botanist.

With

Nor male, nor female; neither, and yet both;
Of neuter gender, tho' of Irish growth;
A six-foot fuckling, mincing in his gate;
Affected, peevish, prim, and delicate;
Fearful it seem'd, tho' of Athletic make,
Lest brutal breezes should too roughly shake
Its tender form, and savage motion spread
O'er its pale cheeks the horrid manly red.

Much did it talk in its own pretty phrase,
Of genius and of taste, of play'rs and plays;
Much too of writings, which itself had wrote,
Of special merit, tho' of little note,
For fate, in a strange humour, had decreed
That what it wrote, none but itself should read;
Much too it chatter'd of dramatic laws,
Misjudging critics, and misplac'd applause;
Then, with a self-complacent jutting air,
It smil'd, it smirk'd, it wriggled to the chair;
And,

With sleek appearance and with ambling pace,
 And, type of vacant head, with vacant face,
 The Proteus H—ll put in his modest plea.—
 “ Let favour speak for others, worth for me.”—
 For who like him his various pow’rs could call
 Into so many shapes, and shine in all ?
 Who could so nobly grace the motley list ;
 Actor; Inspector, Doctor, Botanist ;

Knows

And, with an awkward briskness not his own,
 Looking around, and perking on the throne,
 Triumphant seem’d, when that strange savage dame,
 Known but to few, or only known by name,
 Plain Common Sense appear’d, by Nature there
 Appointed, with plain Truth, to guard the chair.
 The pageant saw, and blasted with her frown,
 To its first state of nothing melted down.

Not shall the Muse (for even there the pride
 Of this vain nothing shall be mortified)
 Nor shall the Muse (should Fate ordain her thimes,
 Fond pleasing thought ! to live in after-times)
 With such a trifler’s name her pages blot:
 Known be the character, the thing forgot ;
 Let it, to disappoint each future aim,
 Live without sex, and die without a name !

Knows any one so well?—Say no one knows;
 At once to play, prescribe, compound, compose?—
 Who can?—But Woodward came; He'll slip'd
 away,
 Melting like ghosts before the rising day.

These lines characterise a man well known to the whole nation, for his writings, his adventures, and his various medicines. The concluding stroke of the satire, hints at an old affair between the doctor and Woodward, in which the former was treated with very little ceremony; he was certainly the aggressor, and conducting himself with no great share of civility, he met a return from Woodward, which made no small *impression* on him. The doctor criticised on him in the Inspector; Woodward in a very humourous pamphlet ridiculed the Inspector, and wrote a burlesque number of that paper with great wit,
 taking

taking off Hill's manner of writing, and placing him in the most ridiculous light. He has often been engaged in such disputes. Smart in the Hilliad gave him a terrible wound ; and Mr. Murphy, in the Gray's-Inn Journal, seems to be frequently engaged against him. His merit as a botanist is acknowledged by all Europe ; but when he quits the path which nature has struck out for him, he degenerates into a mere scribbler. There is hardly any art or science but this volatile man composes on it in his numerous works : it would take some pages to give even a list of them. Some of the papers of the Inspector have merit ; the Actor is not a bad criticism, and the state of the theatres contains a great variety of common-place theatrical criticism, thrown together in a style agreeable enough. The *Lucina sine concubitu* has real humour ;

mour ; it has been said that the doctor was not the author of it, but I never heard any other person named for it, and the piece has too much merit for its author to have been ashamed of it. The Review of the works of the Royal Society was composed with great spirit, humour, and judgment. The doctor, it seems, was refused a seat, and in revenge ridiculed the Society with such well-guided satire, that they have since been more cautious in admitting only such pieces as are worthy their reputation. All the botanical productions of our author have great merit ; they are very numerous, and do honour to the age. After these pieces, what can we say to Mrs. Bradley's Cookery, a piece of our author's ? Thoughts on God and Nature, which he wrote while he contemplated the beauties of Miss Diamond ? his numerous

numerous political pamphlets, his innumerable articles in Reviews and Magazines? his Naval History, in short, that multiplicity of miscellaneous pieces which are a disgrace to their author? They have however answered his expectations: I have been assured that Doctor Hill made one year, by his writing, eleven hundred pounds, and was paid it all by the sheet, which is astonishing. He has for many years enjoyed a very ample revenue by his writings, and his medicines have been yet more profitable to him, seldom producing less than a thousand pounds a year: he long lived in a most dissipated manner; and had his income been as many thousands as it was hundreds, he would yet have been poor. Since he has had a place given him, his publications have been but few, and very good: It is to be hoped he will for the

future study his genius rather than his wants.

The Apology was his next poem, and far from being his worst ; it is an epistle, and never once wanders into any other species of poetry, but is as regular as the plan requires. I shall quote a few passages from this and the rest of the author's poems, which may not be disagreeable to the reader.

1. Great are his perils in that stormy time,
Who rashly ventures on a sea of rhyme,
Around vast surges roll, winds envious blow,
And jealous rocks and quicksands lurk below ;
Greatly his foes he dreads, but more his friends,
He hurts me most who lavishly commends.

Mr. Churchill has experienced the boisterous life of a satiric poet, though I much question whether he repents yielding

ing to poetic impulse. He has been taxed with a multitude of vices, since he ventured in poetic seas ; his character is represented in the blackest light, and even his poetry condemned by snarling critics to oblivion. The truth of the first is little known to the nation ; his readers, I apprehend, little concern themselves with such charges, but I am confident his poetry will outlive his accusations : it certainly would give great pleasure to many, to see him refute the variety of calumnies that have been so plentifully thrown out against him.

2. The mighty monarch, in theatric sack,
Carries his whole regalia at his back ;
His royal consort heads the female band,
And leads the heir-apparent in her hand ;
The pannier'd ass creeps on with conscious pride,
Bearing a future prince on either side.

No choice musicians in this troupe are found,
 To varnish nonsense with the charms of sound ;
 No swords, no daggers, not one poison'd bowl ;
 No lightning flashes here, no thunders roll ;
 No guards to swell the monarch's train are shown ;
 The monarch here, must be an *host alone*.
 No solemn pomp, no slow processions here ;
 No Ammon's entry, and no Juliet's bier.

This description is admirable : nothing can be more beautifully satirical than these harmonious lines, which paint the wretchedness of strollers with such humour ; the strokes of ridicule are delicate and expressive ; there are few passages in the author's poems more finished than this satirical description.

3. Perish my muse !—A wish 'bove all severe
 To him who ever held the Muses dear,
 If e'er her labours weaken to refine
 The generous roughness of a nervous line.

The

The true character of Mr. Churchill's poetry! Almost always harmonious; but they seldom contain that perfect music which is almost always inconsistent with a nervous versification; there is an expressive boldness in his lines which is truly *generous*. He praises Pope for his numbers, but censures the sameness of his versification. The following panegyrick on Dryden is very beautiful.

4. Here let me bend, great Dryden, at thy shrine,
 Thou dearest name to all the tuneful nine.
 What if some dull lines in cold order creep,
 And with his theme the poet seems to sleep?
 Still when his subject rises proud to view,
 With equal strength the poet rises too.
 With strong invention, noblest vigour fraught,
 Thought still springs up, and rises out of thought;
 Numbers ennobling numbers in their course,
 In varied sweetness flow, in varied force;

The pow'rs of genius and of judgment join,
And the whole art of poetry is thine.

These lines are wrote with the spirit of that great poet they commend : Dryden well deserves such praise ; he was one of the greatest geniuses our poetic list can produce ; but far from being equally excellent in every species of poetry. It is amazing, that this author is so much neglected : for one set of his works that are to be met with, there are twenty of Pope's. There are, indeed, more who are pleased with mere musical jingle, than with Dryden's manly lines ; and how many prefer Pope's pastorals to the imitable ode on St. Cecilia ? There is not one good edition of all Dryden's works, which is a scandal to the taste of the nation. This great poet is incalculably at the head of all modern lyric bards ;

bards : as a satirist, his merit is great and extensive ; his fables and miscellaneous poetic pieces display a fruitful imagination, most harmonious nervous numbers, and vast justness of sentiment. As for his tragedies, their character is of a more mixed nature ; we find innumerable passages, in which the brightness of his genius blazes with the utmost lustre ; but the rhimes which disgrace both them and their author, are intolerable in such pieces. Dryden had not the *feeling* necessary for tragedy. Let epic poets *think*, says Dr. Young, the tragedian's point is rather to *feel*. This great poet was a stranger to the true pathetic, which ravishes the audience, and overwhelms them in a conflict of passion ; by numbers, expression, and sentiment, he strove to make amends for his deficiency. Applause is not to be given, but extorted ;

and the silent lapse of a single tear does the writer more honour, than the rattling thunder of a thousand hands. Applauding hands and dry eyes, which during Dryden's theatrical reign often met, are a satire on the writer's talent, and the spectator's taste.—As a translator, he was greatly superior to most, and had he possessed equal leisure, would have made his Virgil superior to Pope's of Homer. He had more ease, but his negligence or haste prevented his finishing so highly as Pope.

Night is the next poem of our author's, and, like all his other pieces, abounds with very fine lines, and the most poignant satire. It is an epistle addressed to Robert Lloyd, and composed almost with the only design to praise late hours and good cheer: A most reverend subject!

ject ! The poet treats it with infinite spirit; and those who read for amusement, will find as much in this little poem as in any this age has produced of the kind. Physicians, lawyers, politicians, citizens, and ministers, all receive their share of ridicule. The first are satirized with several strokes of humour.

1. Let the sage doctor (think him one we know)
 With scraps of ancient learning overflow,
 In all the dignity of *wig* declare
 The fatal consequence of midnight air,
 How damps and vapours as it were by stealth
 Undermine life, and sap the walls of health.
 For me, let Galen moulder on the shelf,
 I'll live, and be physician to myself.
 Whilst soul is join'd to body, whether fate
 Allot a longer or a shorter date,
 I'll make them live as brother should with brother,
 And keep them in good humour with each other.

Mr. Churchill seems to have as great an aversion to physick and physicians as the

the celebrated Rousseau. I cannot forbear quoting a passage from his *Emile*, which is excessively spirited, and I fear too just. " A debilitated body enervates the mind. Hence the influence of physicks, are more destructive to mankind than all the evils it pretends to cure. I know not, for my part, of what malady we are cured by the physicians, but I know many fatal ones which they inflict on us. Such are cowardice, pusillanimity, credulity, and the fear of death. If they cure the body of pain, they deprive the soul of fortitude. What end doth it answer to society, that they keep a parcel of rotten carcases on their legs? It is men the community wants, and those we never see come out of their hands. I have no design to enlarge here on the futility of physick; my present purpose being only to consider it in a moral light. I can not

not however forbear observing, that mankind use the same sophistry, in regard to the use of medicine, as they do with respect to their search after truth. They suppose always, that when a physician treats a patient who recovers, he has cured him ; and that when they have gone through a disquisition concerning the truth, they have found it. They do not see that we ought to put in the balance, against one cure effected by physick, the deaths of an hundred patients it has killed ; or that we should oppose to the utility of one boasted truth, the mischief of a thousand errors, fallen into by making the discovery. The science which enlightens, and the physick that cures, are doubtless very useful ; but the pretended science that misleads, and the physick that kills, are as useful to some few particular persons ; but I affirm it to

be

be destructive to the human race in general. It may be replied, as it constantly is, the fault lies in the physician, and not in the science of medicine, which is otherwise infallible. Well, well, be it so; take care, however, the physick be never accompanied by the doctor; for as sure as ever they come together, there will be an hundred times more to fear from the blunders of the artist, than to hope for from the efficacy of the art."*

... This is extremely spirited, and I wish there was not so much reason to think it just, as it is severe. However, this ingenuous Frenchman is rather too free with weak constitutions; he is certainly right in rejecting the office of tutor to such; but they may certainly be of as much

* Mem. in Em. vol. i. p. 45.

use to society as more athletic mortals, unless we reject all advantages of genius, science, and arts. He himself allows that the science which enlightens is very useful : it therefore only remains to show that weak bodies may contain great souls ; of which there are so many instances, that it would be tiresome to enumerate them.

Rousseau, in most of his works, indulges the reveries of a romantic fancy ; I know but few of his pieces that do not contain numbers of paradoxes, which are displayed with all the beauty of expression, and with an amazing subtlety of argument. He is certainly one of the greatest of the present French writers : I know none but Voltaire who can be compared to him, as they are both men in

nowhere imagination has burned with a bright flame, and who have aimed at the title of philosophers in their several pieces. The latter has ran his course, nor are we to expect any more works from his various pen that will do honour to their author; but the former is not so very far advanced in years, but we may be entertained with many admirable ones of his; and I make little doubt but he will rise (if he lives near as long) superior to Voltaire, as a great author, though not as a man of wit.

Julie is the capital piece of Rousseau's charming pen, and one of the finest compositions of the kind ever published in any language: it is thought he had Richardson in his eye when he planned it; and, if that is true, he has infinitely surpassed his model: it is difficult

cult, for a man of taste to praise our countryman more than he deserves; but surely the tediousness of his plans, his trifling, verbose language, and his dwelling in such a tiresome manner on minute, but uninteresting particulars, greatly lessen the value of his novels. The Frenchman's language is so extremely beautiful, that it would alone render his work wonderfully pleasing, if it did not cloath the noblest sentiments, and pourtray the most striking originality of character: the amazing fire of his pencil catches the life of every object, paints it in the most glowing animated colours, and points every tract to view in the most admirable light. Never author was more pathetic; never man displayed the tender passions so naturally; nor is there a work extant that speaks so immediately to the heart. Rousseau has a feeling soul,

soul, and possesses in the highest degree the art of affecting his readers. With how much delicacy has he expressed all the various conflicts of virtue, love, duty, and honour in the first part of his work ? What noble generous sentiments, what sublime philosophy, flow in many letters from the pens of his characters ! What can be finer than the arguments in favour of resignation, and against duelling, suicide and adultery ! With how much spirit has he satirised the manners of Paris ! With what justness, and how comprehensibly in a few words, has he characterised Anson's expedition ! Was every any thing so beautiful as Julie's domestic œconomy, and her country life ? Never pen was so happy at description ; it would be endless to point out all the instances of his admirable talent in those delicate touches which render description so

so enchanting. Who can read the latter part of the work, and not long to enjoy such a rural life? It was a noble and benevolent design, to paint a country-life in such beautiful colours, to convince mankind that happiness is only to be found in scenes of rural innocence. Yet this work, this admirable work, has been abused and despised: I need say little of those who characterise themselves sufficiently by their empty criticisms on Julie. Dulness and ignorance cannot taste the delicate beauties that are spread with such a bountiful hand in that work of genius. Prudes, who would make amends for the want of native modesty, by their clamours against freedom of composition, are loud in their abuse of the admirable Julie. And men who prize the appearance of virtue more than the reality, make a show of merit in rail-

ing at Rousseau, and, with all the virulence of stupidity, dwell on the very *minutiae* of his errors, without having the capacity to enjoy his beauties. What but critical dulness can enumerate the faults of such an author, and forget his excellencies, can rail at one, and not commend the other ?

Errors like straws upon the surface flow,
He who would search for gold, must dive below.

In his *Emile*, this great author displayed the same genius, though in a different manner, his fancy more under the dominion of judgment. Never work spoke a deeper knowledge of the human breast. This system appears chimerical to the world; and no wonder, for a man must renounce its prejudices, to educate his child on this plan. If this work was not ridiculed

ridiculed and exploded by men of this world, it would be the greatest satire on it; it would be a proof that he was inconsistent with himself, and dull in attempting to reconcile custom to reason. I have heard some people ask how a lad is to be educated on M. Rousseau's system, that is designed for the army, law, physick, or many other professions that require some knowledge, and an early introduction into life? In my humble opinion, the author of *Emile* never designed his plan for the use of such gentlemen: his design throughout is to make his pupil a man of reason; and I believe it would not take M. Rousseau many pages, to overturn all the pretensions, which the followers of those professions can possibly bring for the *reasons* on which they are founded. Those who bring their children up to such employ-

ments, should turn to quite other authors. Their objections are the language of prejudice; they never consider that the moment a lad is placed in one of these blessed employments, with money for his aim, he is immediately ruined for a *man of reason*, as Rousseau would make him. His whole scheme of education contradicts the custom of the world. Power, riches, and honours, are the ruin of mankind: he would teach his pupil to renounce them all, and pass through life poor, but happy. Half the employments of the world are absolutely ruinous to health; which with him is the first blessing. If you would have your son gain an estate, by no means educate him on his plan; for he would certainly teach him to despise those riches, which you regard as the *summum bonum*. Emilius would be a prodigy in the world, an un-

com-

common man, quite unlike the rest of the species ; happiness would be his aim, and virtue the means. But nothing can be more absurd, than to imagine his noble maxims of education can be reconciled with the practice of the world, which absolutely forbid it. Thus we judge the author by rule and criterions, to which his work has no relation, and the wonder would be if it was not condemned. But, spite of every prejudice of mankind, his work will be immortal ; and even the present degenerate race of mortals may find many rules scattered up and down in *Emile*, that are admirable even for present practice. We may in part adopt the plan, and reject part, and so by culling and patching may improve our own wretched maxims, and cannot be made worse than they are : We may learn not to sacrifice the youngest years

to those which are to follow; and except for those professions to which it is absolutely necessary, desist from flogging our unhappy children into learned block-heads. We may learn many useful lessons, if prejudice will but let us open our eyes. If any part of this celebrated work deserves blame, it is the system of theism in the third volume; but even that is tempered throughout with modest doubtfulness, and we cannot but pity the errors of so good a heart. Mons. Rousseau has too good an understanding to reject the evidences of christianity, or not commend in the warmest terms its moral; but bred up in doctrines among Roman Catholicks, and falling young into the hands of a Deist, no wonder he is apt to make his reason his only guide, and reject some of the evidences of revelation. He has since published his letter

to the archbishop of Paris, in which he asserts in the strongest manner his being a true christian: if we consider his life and love of particularity, we shall not wonder at his rejecting some of the seeming proofs of christianity, and yet fully believing in all essential points*. His

thoughts

* He seems in his letter to D'Alembert, to think the Bible corrupted in some passages, which we may suppose are those which he finds difficult to believe; but it certainly may be said, that if every part of the scriptures was rejected which individuals disbelieve, we should soon be left without the least trace of sacred writings. I shall quote his words in which he speaks of his continually reading that most sublime of all books. *Nul n'est plus pénétré que moi d'amour & de respect pour le plus sublime de tous les livres; il me console & m'instruit tous les jours, quand les autres ne m'inspirent plus que du dégout.* Mais je soutiens que si l'écriture elle même nous donnoit de Dieu quelque idée indigne de lui, il faudroit la rejeter, en

thoughts on travelling are extremely just, and he every where shows the falsity of the notion of his being a Misanthrope, his heart every where dilating at the thoughts of viewing a man in a state of natural innocence. What can be more truly philosophical than his scheme of life for himself, if he was rich? How benevolent his mind, how noble his contempt of riches, and how sublime his content in a state of solitary poverty ?

All this ingenious author's pieces bear the true marks of genius, and are generally remarkable for their originality.

cela, comme vous rejetez en géométrie les démonstrations qui mènent à des conclusions absurdes ; car de quelque authenticité que puisse être le texte sacré, il est encore plus croyable que la Bible soit altérée, que Dieu injuste ou malfaisant.

Œuvres, tome ii. p. 21.

His

His *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, is a most subtle piece of argumentative reasoning*, and although every artificial comfort of life, every endearing tie of society speak in the strongest manner against his hypothesis, although numbers branded the piece with the title of absurdity, yet the many answers it gave rise to, prove in the clearest manner the vast abilities of its author, Stanislaus king of Poland, the Abbé Condillac, Signor Martinelli, &c. &c. &c. have attempted to refute his arguments, but in vain: the only rational way of answering such an hypothetical

* Martinelli, speaking of this work, allows our author to be one of the most ingenious and penetrating writers of this age. " Mons. Rousseau," says he, uno certamente delli ingegni più penetranti del nostro secolo, &c.

piece is to paint the blessings of society in the strongest manner, and leave the world to judge which is preferable, them or those of a state of nature ; but Rousseau's abilities are too great to be foiled at his own weapons.

He says, *Si elle nous a destinés à être sains, j'ose presque assurer que l'état de reflexion est un état contre nature, & que l'homme qui médite est un animal dépravé* *. This is a strange assertion : he goes on soon after in the same strain, *Enfin, says he, à moins de supposer ces concours singuliers & fortuits de circonstances, dont je parlerai dans la suite, & qui pouvoient fort bien ne jamais arriver, il est clair en tout état de*

* *Discours sur l'origine, &c.* See his Œuvres Di-verses, tome ii. p. 14.

cause, que le premier qui se fit des habita-
ou un logement, se donna en cela des cho-
ses peu nécessaires : puis qu'il s'en étoit
passé jusqu' alors, & qu'on ne voit pas
pourquoi il n'eût pu supporter, homme
fait, un genre de vie qu'il supportoit des
son enfance,

Such passages as these are more open
to refutation than a formal answer to all
his arguments. It requires very little re-
flection to prove, that thinking or medi-
tation, is as natural to man in his origi-
nal state, as sensation. Whoever reads
such quotations, sees their absurdity in a
strong light ; but let them turn to the
book, and they will soon be bewildered,
almost out of their understanding, in the
subtlety of his arguments, and the force
of his imagination. The same observa-
tions will remain just in regard to
his

his *Discours sur les Sciences & les Arts*, in which he brings every argument that can be thought of, to prove the ill effects attending the arts and sciences: it is very difficult to refute him in a formal discourse; but a multitude of his sentiments are absolutely paradoxes. This work is a very proper supplement to the piece I mentioned last. How angry he is with cloaths: He says, “ L'homme de bien est un athlète qui se plaît à combattre nud. Il méprise tous ses vils ornementa qui generoient l'usage de ses forces, & dont la plupart n'ont été inventés que pour cacher quelque deformité.”

It would be an enquiry worthy of a philosophic pen, to search into the real antiquity of dress, and why many nations remain, to this day, naked, while others, in the same latitude, have so long used cloaths.

cloaths. Mons. de Rousseau, notwithstanding the evident absurdity of many of his assertions, yet gives us a multitude of very urgent reasons for thinking that all such refinements as dress, and other social ones, are so many deviating steps from the paths of nature ; but whether he is philosophically right or not, I leave to some abler pen to determine. This discourse has met with some answers, but none that hath refuted the author's reasoning. That arts and sciences are friends to slavery, the history of too many nations evinces ; for they can seldom be reared without the assistance of luxury ; and the refined taste they introduce, is not so vigorous in defence of liberty, as the more rude uncultivated people, who can judge of little besides freedom. Rousseau addresses the civilized nations with great spirit : " Peuples

po-

policés, says he, cultivez-les : heureux esclaves, vous leur devez ce goût délicat & fin dont vous vous piquez ; cette douceur de caractère & cette urbanité de mœurs qui rendent parmi vous le commerce si liant & si facile ; en un mot, les apparences de toutes les vertus, sans en avoir aucune *.”

The works of this admirable Frenchman are all remarkable : His *Lettre sur la Musique Françoise*, contains the most violent attack against the French music that ever was made ; and never was any argument more clear and convincing. He proves, in a most undeniable manner, that the French have no music at all ; he tries, what they call their music, by the true principles of melody and har-

* *Œuvres Diverses*, tome i. p. 9.

mony,

mony, and with great reason rejects all their pompous pretensions. Mons. D'Alembert joins with Rousseau in his opinion : " *Je crois*" says he, " *tres fermement avec lui, que nous n'avons point de musique, ou du moins que nous en avons trop peu pour nous en glorifier.*"* This ingenious Frenchman is not absurdly prejudiced in favour of their music, but allows to Rousseau's arguments their due weight ; he observes very justly himself, speaking of the opinion which all the nations of Europe have of the French opera, " *Toutes sans exception ont rejetté notre opéra, & notre musique, pour leur préférer l'opéra & la musique des Italiens* ; soit que l'opéra François ne leur ait pas paru aussi supérieur à ceux d' Italie

* *De la Liberté de la Musique.* See Mélanges, &c. tome iv. p. 446.

que nous l'imaginons ; soit que le dégoût pour notre musique l'ait emporté chez elles sur les avantages que nous pouvons avoir du côté des pieces & du genre spectacle." It is amazing how the whole musical tribe in France took fire at the publishing this letter of Rousseau's. Blindly devoted to their prejudices, they had far rather their country, religion, or any thing else, had been attacked ; but their opera, of which they had always been so vain, they thought too sacred to be mauled in such a tetrible manner *.

Narcisse

* D'Alembert, in his essay, observes, Mons. Rousseau a osé pourtant en médire dans cette lettre fameuse tant combattue, & si peu réfutée ; mais les vérités qu'il a eu le courage d'imprimer sur ce grand sujet, lui ont fait plus d'ennemis que tous ses paradoxes." Mélanges, &c. p. 277. And in another place he says, " Le Monologue d'Armide

Narcisse, and *Le Divin du Village*, are both dramatic pieces of merit. A beautiful simplicity reigns through them ; the first he wrote when very young ; and, in a very sensible preface, which he afterwards published with it, he apologizes for his writings, or rather defends them against the misconstructions of many writers, who had endeavoured to point out many inconsistencies in his conduct and compositions.

mide vanté par nos peres comme un chef-d'œuvre, jouissoit paisiblement de sa réputation, lorsque, le citoyen de Geneve a osé l'attaquer. Sa critique est restée sans réponse. En vain le célebre Mr. Rameau, pour l'honneur de notre ancienne musique (qui devroit néanmoins lui être plus indifférent qu'à personne) a essayé de venger Lulli des coups que Mr. Rousseau lui a portés :

Si Pergamā dextra
Defendi possent, etiam hac defensa suissent.

His *Lettre a Mr. D'Alembert, sur le projet de établir un theâtre de Comédie en Geneve*, displays the same romantic fancy as his other works ; but it contains a thousand new and penetrating observations on men, manners, and opinions : there are several paradoxes in it. If it was entirely free from them, the piece could not be Rousseau's. His defence of drunkenness is droll enough : " Mais enfin, le goût du vin n'est pas un crime, il en faire rarement commettre, il rend l'homme stupide & non pas méchant. Pour une querelle passagere qu'il cause, il forme cent attachemens durables. Généralement parlant, les buveurs ont de la cordialité, de la franchise ; ils sont presque tous bons, droits, justes, fideles, braves, & honnetes gens, à leur défaut près."

There

There are several other curious passages I could wish to quote, were I not afraid of being too tedious; but I cannot overlook his character of the English, as I am persuaded my readers will be entertained with the notions which this celebrated Frenchman entertains of us: "Les Angloises sont douce & timides, les Angloises sont durs & féroces. D'où vient cette apparente opposition? De ce que le caractère de chaque sexe est ainsi renforcé, & que c'est aussi le caractère national de porter tout à l'extrême. A cela près, tout est semblable. Les deux sexes aiment à vivre à part; tous deux font cas des plaisirs de la table; tous deux se ressemblent pour boire après le repas, les hommes du vin, les femmes du thé; tous deux se livrent au jeu sans fureur, & s'en font un métier plutôt qu'une passion; tous deux ont un grand

respect pour les choses honnêtes ; tous deux honorent la foi conjugale, & s'ils la violent, ils ne se font point un honneur de la violer ; la paix domestique plaît à tous deux ; tous deux sont silencieux, & taciturnes ; tous deux difficiles à emouvoir ; tous deux emportés dans leurs passions ; pour tous deux l'ameur est terrible, et tragique, il décide du sort de leurs jours, il ne s'agit pas de moins, dit Murault, que d'y laisser la raison ou la vie ; enfin tous deux se plaisent à la compagne, & les Dames Angloises errent aussi volontiers dans leurs parcs solitaires, qu'elles vont se montrer à Vauxhall. De ce goût commun pour la solitude, naît aussi celui des lectures contemplatives & des romans dont l'Angleterre est inondée. Ainsi tous deux, plus recueillis avec eux-mêmes, se livrent moins à des imitations frivoles, prennent mieux le goût des vrais plaisirs

plaisirs de la vie, & songent moins à paraître heureux qu'à l'être."

Many strokes in this picture are certainly very true ones: I wish others were the same; as for the love of their solitary parks, which he says our ladies are so fond of, I fear the violent and intoxicating love of the pleasures of London, which yearly increases, will at length overcome all affection for the country; I mean in those whose fortunes are ample enough to support excess. In those classes of the people whose fortunes are not quite so abundant, and who have seldom breathed the poisonous air of the capital, the true character of the nation will much better appear *.

Mons.

* Strange as it may appear, this paradoxical writer rails violently against comedy as a corruptor

Mons. Marmontel, not long since, published an answer to this letter of Rousseau's. He is a warm advocate for the

of manners, and yet would revive the Lacedemonian dances of naked maidens at Geneva. He defends the proposition in these terms : " Mais pense-t-on qu'au fond l'adroite parure de nos femmes ait moins son danger qu'une nudité absolue, dont l'habitude tourneroit bientôt les premiers effets en indifférence & peut être en dégoût ? Ne fait-on pas que les statues & les tableaux n'offendent les yeux que quand un mélange de vêtemens rend les nudités obscènes ? Le pouvoir immédiat des sens est foible & borné ; c'est par l'entremise de l'imagination qu'ils font leurs plus grands ravages ; c'est elle qui prend soin d'irriter les désirs, en prenant à leurs objets encore plus d'attrait que ne leur en donna la nature ; c'est elle qui découvre à l'œil avec scandale ce qu'il ne voit pas seulement comme nud, mais comme devant être habillé. Il n'y a point de vêtement si modeste, au travers duquel un regard enflammé par l'imagination n'aille porter les désirs. Une jeune

the theatre, but nevertheless praises the great talents of Rousseau in warm terms : Nous applaudissons, says he, à son zèle, nous admirons ce patriotisme éclairé, vigilant, & courageux ; cette éloquence noble & simple, qui n'a rien d'inculte, & rien d'étudié, où la douceur & la véhémence, les images & les sentimens, le ton philosophique & le langage populaire sont mêlés avec d'autant plus d'art,

jeune Chinoise avançant un bout de pied couvert & chaussé, sera plus de ravage à Pékin que n'eut fait la plus belle fille du monde dansant toute nue au bas du Taygete. Mais quand on s'habille avec autant d'art, & si peu d'exactitude que les femmes font aujourd'hui, quand on ne montre moins que pour faire désirer davantage, quand l'obstacle qu'on oppose aux yeux ne sert qu'à mieux irriter l'imagination, quand on ne cache une partie de l'objet que pour parer celle qu'on expose,

Heu ! male tum mitea defendit pampinus iwas.

que Partie ne s'y fait point fenoir. v' ille
est la justice que j'aime à rendre aux singul
tentions & aux talens de Mr. Rous
seau.

Another work of Mr. Rousseau's not
so well known as some others is, *De
Contract social, ou Principes du Droit politi
que.* It differs very much from the ge
nerality of his works, being divided into
books and chapters, and containing a
regular chain of reasoning: it is full of
the noblest spirit of liberty; a hatred to
despotism, and does, in short, great ho
nour to its author. Nevertheless this
sensible writer could not refrain from his
paradoxes. We are all to be slaves to
the Tartars, and the island of Corsica is

• *Apologie du Theatre.* See his *Contes Ma
raux*, tome ii. p. 175. Amst. edit.

the only country in Europe capable of legislation.

I have been drawn into a longer sketch of this celebrated author's pieces than I at first intended: but there is no man in the present literary world, who has a more rising reputation than Rousseau, and the vast success his works meet with.

* L'Empire de Russie voudra subjuger l'Europe, & sera subjugué lui-même. Les Tartares ses sujets ou ses voisins deviendront ses maîtres & les nôtres: Cette révolution me paroît infallible. Tous les rois de l'Europe travaillent de concert à accélérer. p. 96.

Il est encore en Europe un pays capable de législation; c'est l'île de Corse. La valeur & la constance avec laquelle ce brave peuple, a pu recouvre & défendre sa liberté, mériteroit bien que quelque homme sage lui apprit à la conserver. J'ai quelque pressentiment qu'un jour cette petite île étonnera l'Europe. p. 110.

in England, in some measure justify any reasonable criticisms on them.

2. But if in searching round the world we find
Some gen'rous youth, the friend of all mankind,
Whose anger, like the bolt of Jove, is sped
In terrors only at the guilty head,
Whose mercies, like heav'n's dew refreshing fall,
In gen'ral love and charity to all,
Pleas'd we behold such worth on any throne,
And doubly pleas'd we find it on our own.

This compliment to the king is very genteel, without degenerating into fulsome flattery ; and perhaps, is more honourable than many others which have been published, as they come from a muse of the most noble and independent spirit, who always seems much inclined to speak her mind freely ; as the reader may see by turning to a very beautiful passage, beginning *Foe to restraint, &c.* and from the following spirited lines.

3. Armies embattled meet, and thousands bleed,
 For some vile spot which cannot fifty feed.;
 Squirrels for nuts contend, and, wrong and right,
 For the world's empire kings ambitious fight:
 What odds?—To us 'tis all the self-same thing.
A NUT, A WORLD, A SQUIRREL, and a KING.

The satire here is very poignant, and no less just: the fatal ambition of princes, which involves millions in most destructive wars, merely for trifling causes, well deserves to be satirized with all the severity of ridicule. Mr. Churchill seems to regard the character of an independent poet as far above all adulation to the *real* or *seeming* great. We see the little difference he makes between a squirrel and a king, as objects of his attention.

4. The cit, a common-council-man by place,
 Ten thousand mighty nothings in his face,
 By situation as by nature great,
 With nice precision parcels out the state,

Proves,

Proves, disapproves, affirms, and then denies,
 Objects himself, and to himself replies ;
 Wielding aloft the politician rod,
 Makes P--- by turns a devil and a god,
 Maintains e'en to the very teeth of pow'r,
 The same thing right and wrong in half an hour,
 Now all is well, now he suspects a plot,
 And plainly proves *whatever is, is not.*
 Fearfully wise, he shakes his empty head,
 And deals out empires as he deals out thread,
 His useless scales are in a corner flung,
 And Europe's balance hangs upon his tongue.

This satire is extremely well directed, and most pleasingly severe. The rage of politicks, which almost turned the brains of the whole kingdom, but particularly the cits, cannot be satirized with too great severity : conversation for some years past has been every where interrupted and ingrossed by noisy politicians, who run into all the extravagances which Churchill has ridiculed with so much humour. I wish

to repeat this

sensation.

this able satirist, for the future, would employ his abilities in lashing such foibles, which so well deserve his poignant ridicule. But sometimes his own maxims of life, which are not always the most just, will break out, and ridicule is too often flung at contrary inclinations.

5. Thus will we live, tho' in our teeth are hurl'd,
Those *backney brumpets*, PRUDENCE and the WORLD.

And soon after he breaks out with all his spirit in the same strain.

6. Might the whole world be plac'd within my
span,
I would not be *that THING*, *that PRUDENT MAN*.

I make little doubt but these lines have been roared out with all the bellowing fury of drunken midnight mirth, in half the towns of the kingdom. Mr. Churchill, 'tis true, is consistent; and disregards
prudence

prudence in his life, as much as he satirizes it in his poetry. But let us see what provision for *mirth* satire alone will make. I hope he will have better luck than many of his rhyming brethren, for his abilities deserve encouragement. The prudence of hypocrisy deserves his ridicule; but he has made few distinctions. The concluding lines of the poem are extremely spirited, and the whole is composed with such severity of ridicule, such nervous strokes of humour, such a spirited versification, that if it does not instruct, I am sure it must please.

The Prophecy of Famine was his last poem, and the merit of it as one very great: like his other pieces, it contains many strokes of humour, a vast profusion of spirited satire, and a most nervous versification. The design of it is infamous;

mous ; general satire on whole nations and bodies of people is pernicious. Boileau has been much, and justly blamed, for satirizing a whole sex ; but Mr. Churchill has in this piece ridiculed the whole kingdom of Scotland, with all the virulent antipathy of a pen dipp'd in gall. Every one must equally detest the subject, and admire the poetry. It is called a pastoral ; but I make no apology for ranking it as a satire. The following lines are some of the most beautiful in the poem.

1. Far as the eye could reach, no green was seen,
 Earth, clad in russet, scorn'd the lively green.
 The plague of locusts they, secure, defy,
 For in three hours a grasshopper must die.
 No living thing, whate'er its food, feasts there,
 But the camelion who can feast on air.
 No birds, except as birds of passage, flew,
 No bee was known to hum, no dove to coo.

No streams as amber smooth, as amber clear,
 Were seen to glide, or heard to warble there :
 Rebellion's spring, which through the country ran,
 Furnish'd with bitter draughts the steady clan.
 No flowers embalm'd the air, but one white rose
 Which on the tenth of June by instinct blows ;
 By instinct blows at morn, and, when the shades
 Of drizzly eve prevails, by instinct fades.

Here is a great power of versification displayed, and a fine talent for description ; the circumstances are indeed many of them outre and beyond nature ; but Mr. Churchill had no fears of being too severe ; the description of Famine is of the same stamp, and worked up to a dreadful pitch of horrid wretchedness. The dialogue between Jockey and Sweeney is very humourous.

2. Devouring War imprison'd in the north,
 Shall at our call in horrid pomp break forth,
 And when his chariot-wheels with thunder hung,
 Fell Discord braying with her brazen tongue,

Death

Death in the van, with Anger, Hate, and Fear,
 And Desolation stalking in the rear,
 Revenge, by Justice guided, in his train,
 He drives impetuous o'er the trembling plain,
 Shall at our bidding quit his lawful prey,
 And to meek, gentle, gen'rous Peace give way.

These lines I think are the finest in the poem : they contain a noble spirit of poetry, the imagery is truly sublime, the whole speech of Famine is extremely poetical.—The quotations I have made from this gentleman's satires plainly evince his great talents for that species of poetry: happy for him, were they directed to better themes.

S E C T. II.

Of ELEGIAC POETRY.

THE Latin elegiac writers are too well known to need a particular criticism: but surely Quintilian's opinion has more reason in it, than that of twenty such critics as Rapin. He prefers Tibullus to all the elegiac writers. The tender softness of his verses far exceed any thing in Ovid, Propertius, or Gallus. Propertius was a successful imitator of the Greeks: he far surpassed Tibullus in learning, but not in that tender elegance so pleasing in the elegy.* Ovid is a natural,

* Horace justly observes, that plaintive strains are not the only subjects for *humble elegy*, but also love and successful desires.

tural, moving, and passionate writer. The eighth elegy of the second book Ponticorum, excels in the pathetic, and the variety of the wit and elegance. The compliment he paid to himself is well known.

Tantum se nobis elegi debere fatentur,
Quantum Virgilio nobile dabit epos.

' But the lasciviousness of Ovid's writings render many of his pieces disgusting to chaste ears.

Modern times have produced some elegiac writers but little inferior to those of antiquity; and none more deservedly famous than the celebrated Lotichius, a

I 2 German.

Veribus impariter junctis querimonia primum,
Post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos.
Quis tamen exiguos elegos emiserit auctor,
Grammatici certant, & adhuc sub judice lis est.

De Art. Poet. ver. 75.

German. This fine genius was the author of four books of elegies, three of odes, and two of eclogues ; but his elegies are the best of his compositions. He excels extremely in the pathetic, and some pieces are truly sublime : nothing can exceed his elegy on the taking of Magdeburg, and those on the nativity of our Saviour and the Holy Ghost. There were some remarkable incidents in the life of this poet that deserve remembrance. He began his life in the character of a soldier ; but soon quitted it, to pursue his studies with more ease. Going the grand tour, he met with several narrow escapes in France ; at Roan he was near being drowned, by the villainy of two watermen ; at Narbonne he was going to be condemned to death for being found in company with a Spanish spy, to whom he was unknown ; and at Montpelier

Montpelier he narrowly escaped an *amende honorable*, for having heretically eaten meat during Lent.*

Pope's elegy to the memory of an unfortunate lady is extremely pathetic ; more so than any other poem he wrote, except Eloisa to Abelard. I shall forbear speaking particularly of it, as Mr. Warton has already performed that task.

If I was to name an elegy in which an expressive imagery and pathetic elegance breathed throughout, I should recommend Mr. Gray's celebrated one in a country church-yard. It begins with a kind of melancholy solemnity excessively pleasing ; how finely he describes the solemn stillness of every object about

* Vide the Life of Lotichius, prefixed to his Works, by Burman, printed at Amst. 1754.

him! Having mentioned the departed state of those who had taken up their long rest in that seat of the dead, he breaks out into this beautiful reflection :

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

I don't know two lines in the English language that contain more picturesque epithets than *incense-breathing*, *breezy call*, *twitt'ring*, adapted with such propriety to the subject ; they throw an inexpressible beauty over the whole verse. He then speaks of the homely employment of the departed poor, and again clothes a just reflection in the most poetic language.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
 Await alike th'inevitable hour.
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave;

These lines are very fine. 'Tis the peculiar characteristic of genuine poetry to set known truths in the most striking light, and to give philosophy its most pleasing dress. After painting the instability of pompous tombs and animated busts, he reflects that that neglected spot might contain

Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
 but then observes,

Chill penury suppress'd their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

How most poetically beautiful is this last line ? The poet has said more in it,

I 4 than

that if he had lengthened our line throughout through twenty stanzas, at some inspired smatterer in rhyme would have attempted.

In the next verse is another line, in which the thought and poetry is equally great.

*Fulness of sense is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.*

He continues the thought in the same beautiful strain;

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrants of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

In short, to point out all the beauties of this celebrated elegy, would be to transcribe it: but the reader will be able to see several marks of Mr. Gray's fine and

and original genius in the extracts I have made from it †.

Virgil's tomb is a poem well known : it is indeed one of those few pieces that does honour to the present age, abounding with expressive imagery, and most beautiful strokes of descriptive poetry. The author describes the present state of the monumental remains of that great poet in very poetical numbers :

—————A nodding dome
O'ergrown with moss, is now all Virgil's tomb,
'Twas such a scene as gave a kind relief
To memory, in sweetly penive grief :
Gloomy unpleasing images it wrought ;
No musing soft complacency of thought,
For time had canker'd all, and worn away
Ev'n the last mournful graces of decay :

† Dodslēy's Poems, vol. iv. p. 1.

Oblivion,

Oblivion, hateful goddess, sat before,
And cover'd with her dusky wings the door †.

These are very fine lines, and naturally raise a melancholy idea in one's mind ; the personification of the goddess Oblivion in the last lines, heightens extremely the gloominess of the imaginary scene ; but the thought is broke off too abruptly. Mr. Pope's description of melancholy, in his Eloisa to Abelard, is much more expressive and sublime. The present slavery of that delightful country, where

Tully dictated, and Maro sung,
is finely touch'd upon in the next paragraph. The whole poem is truly elegiac, and abounds with numerous strokes of

† Dodsley's Poems, vol. iv. p. 144.

well wrought descriptive poetry, striking imagery, and flowing versification.

The Pleasures of Melancholy of Mr. Warton deserves to be remembered among the elegiac pieces in the English language ; as it is a poem extremely picturesque, and contains several passages in which the strength of imagery cannot but strike a reader of sensibility. He gives us no less than three different descriptions of night, a favourite theme among the greatest poets. No reader of taste will regret the length of the quotation.

Beneath yon ruin'd abbey's moss grown piles,
Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,
Where thro' some western window the pale moon
Pours her long levell'd rule of streaming light ;
While fullen sacred silence reigns around,
Save the lone screech-owl's note, who builds his
bow'r

Amid

Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,
Or the calm breeze that rustles in the leaves
Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green
Invests some wailed tow'r.

These are very beautiful lines; but surely the epithet *flaunting* is very improperly used in the last but one. A little further, we meet with the following poetic passage;

—. Lo, all is motionless around;
Roars not the rushing wind; the seas of space
And every beast in mute oblivion lie;
All nature's hush'd in silence and in sleep.

But the most picturesque of the three descriptions is the following one, which certainly impresses the idea of the dead stillness of a still night very expressively.

— The

The waving alms,
That, hoar through time, and rang'd in thick
ray,

Inclose with stately row some rural hall,
Are mute, nor echo with the clamours hoarse
Of rooks rejoicing on their very Boughs ;
While to the shed the dripping poultry crowd, just
A mournful train : secure the village hind along
Hangs o'er the crackling blaze, nor tempest the
storm ;

Fix'd in th'unfinish'd furrow rests the plow.
Rings not the high wood with enliv'ning shouts
Of early hunter ; all is silence drear ;
And deepest sadness wraps the face of things.

The collecting so many circumstances that mark the silence of night, render these descriptions vastly beautiful ; the dripping poultry, and the plow's resting in the unfinished furrow, are here extremely expressive. I cannot help here quoting the description of the Night of Medea in Apollonius.

Πνέοντες μεν επειτί από ταῖς αγενέσιοις κεφαῖς οἱ δὲ εἰς πονταῖς.
 Νοστήσει τὸς Ελαχίντα τὸν καὶ απέραντον Βραχίνος
 Εδραγκού εἰς πονταῖς. οποντοι δὲ καὶ τις οδιτης
 Ήδη καὶ πυλαωρος ειλιδετο· καὶ τινα παιδιάν.
 Μητέρα τεθνεατῶν αδερφῶν περι καμίου εκαλυπτεται.
 Οὐδὲ κυρηνὴ οὐλακη εἰς αερα ποτελιν, οὐ θροος ηνε
 Ηχητης. στηριν δὲ μελανομενην εχειν ορφείν.
 Άλλα μαλ' οὐ Μηδίναν εἴπει γλυκερούς λαβειν ποτε.

Αργον. b. 3. v. 743.

This passage is extremely picturesque, and finely imagined ; but Mr. Rymer, in his Reflections on Aristotle's Poetry, criticises on it in the following strange manner : " Here we have variety of matter, yet rather many than choice thoughts. He gives us the face of things both by land and sea, city and country, the mariner, the traveller, the door-keeper, the mistress of the family, the child and dog ; but loses himself amongst his particulars, and seems to forget for what

what occasion he mentions them. He would say that all the world is fast asleep, but only Medea ; and then his mariners, who are gazing from their ships on Heliœ and Orion, can serve but little for his purpose, unless they may be supposed to sleep with their eyes open. Neither dares he say that the traveller and porter are yet taking a nap, but only that they have a good mind to it ; and after all, we find none but the good woman who had lost her child (and she indeed is fast asleep) unless the dogs may be supposed to be so, because they had left off barking. And these, methinks, were scarce worthy to be taken notice of in an heroic poem, except we may believe, that, in the old time, or that in Greek, they bark heroically." *

The

* Vol. ii. p. 122.—Mr. Warton, in his Observations on Spencer, has refuted the absurdity of

The Love elegies of Mr. Hammond
have very great merit. My Lord Che-
sterfield,

of Rymer's criticism; but I cannot agree with this ingenious gentleman, in supposing that the following lines of Dryden are a burlesque.

All things are hush'd, as Nature's self lay dead;
The mountains seem to nod their drowsy head :
The little birds in dreams their songs repeat,
And sleeping flowers beneath the night-dew sweat.
Ev'n lust and envy sleep.

The third of these lines does not raise any idea ofillness in our minds, but the rest are picturesque; and the thought of making even lust and envy sleep is certainly very expressive. Otway, in his *Orphan*, has also given us a description of night, which has some picturesque strokes.

— All is hush'd, as Nature were retir'd,
And the perpetual motion standing still.

terfield, in the preface prefixed to them, gives them a just character. "He sat down," says he, "to write what he thought, not to think what he should write: 'twas nature and sentiment only that dictated to a real mistress, not youthful and poetic fancy, to an imaginary one. Elegy therefore speaks her own proper native language, the unaffected plaintive language of the tender passions united, the one without pride, the other without meanness. Tibullus seems to have been

So much she from her work appears to cease,
And ev'ry warring element's at peace;
All the wild herds are in their coverts couch'd,
The fishes to their banks or ooze repair'd,
And to the murmurs of the waters sleep;
The feeling air's at rest, and feels no noise,
Except of some soft breaths among the trees,
Rocking the harmless birds that rest upon 'em.

Act iii. sc. 1.

the model our author, judiciously preferred to Ovid ; the former writing directly from the heart to the heart ; the latter too often yielding and addressing himself to the imagination." Mr. Hammond is certainly one of those poets formed almost merely by love ; and this may be the reason of our discerning so many strokes of the pathetic, but none of genius. Mr. Warton very justly says, " That nature is more powerful than fancy ; that we can always feel more than we can imagine ; and that the most artful fiction must give way to truth." * The best of Mr. Hammond's elegies is that beginning with this verse :

He who could first two gentle hearts unbind,
And rob a lover of his weeping fair,

* *Essay on Pope*, p. 253.

Hard was the man, but harder in my mind,
The lover still who dy'd not of despair.

Lord Littleton's monody to the memory of his lady, justly deserves being ranked with the best elegies in our language. It is a beautiful poem, full of tender and pathetic sentiments, strong imagery, and a most poetic verification. It breathes the finest strokes of resignation, piety, and affecting fancy : it is so well known, that I shall only select a few lines from it that are remarkably beautiful.

1. Ye tufted groves, ye gently falling rills,
Ye high o'er-shadowing hills,
Ye lawns gay-smiling with eternal green,
Oft have you my Lucy seen !
But ~~never~~ shall you now behold her more :
Nor will she now with fond delight,
And taste refin'd, your rural charms explore ;
Clos'd are those beauteous eyes in end'les night !

Those beauteous eyes where beaming us'd to shine,
Reason's pure light, and Virtue's spark divine.

These lines not only contain a fine character of the lady, but are very pathetic ; the plaintive strain and tender thought which runs through them, are excessively well adapted to the mournful subject. The following passage contains the same beauty in a great degree.

2. In vain I look around

O'er all the well known ground,
My Lucy's wonted footsteps to descry ;
Where oft we us'd to walk,
Where oft in tender talk,
We saw the summer sun go down the sky ;
Nor by yon fountain's side,
Nor where its waters glide,
Along the valley, can she now be found :
In all the wide-stretch'd prospects ample bound,
No more my mournful eye
Can ought of her espy,
But the sad sacred earth where her dear relicks lie.

What

What a pathetic thought it was, to recal to his memory the idea of his Lucy's walking with him among a variety of scenes, that reminded him every moment of the loss he had sustained ! The poetry is truly beautiful.

3. Sweet babes, who like the little playful fawns
Were wont to trip along these verdant lawns,
By your delighted mother's side,
Who now your infant steps shall guide ?
Ah ! where is now the hand whose tender care,
To ev'ry virtue would have form'd your youth,
And strew'd with flow'rs the thorny ways of truth ?
Oh ! loss beyond repair !
Oh ! wretched father left alone,
To weep their dire misfortune and thy own !

Nothing can be more beautifully pathetic than these lines ; the thought is moving to the last degree. His lordship never wrote so feelingly as in this charming monody ; his heart here breaks loose,

K 3 and

and bemoans its loss in the most melancholy strains ; but 'tis a pity he mentioned the *thorny ways of truth*. Alas ! let us hope those ways are more pleasant than the vulgar imagine them to be. The whole twelfth stanza is remarkably beautiful ; but I cannot help quoting the following passage.

4. Tell how her manners, by the world refin'd,
Left all the taint of modish vice behind,
And made each charm of polish'd courts agree,
With candid Truth's simplicity,
And uncorrupted Innocence !
Tell how to more than manly sense,
She join'd the soft'ning influence
Of more than female tenderness !

How noble, how beautiful is this character ! His lordship's pen warbles the praises of his lost wife, with all the charming simplicity of elegance ; all the beauty of elegiac verse : the tracts of
Lucy's

Lucy's character are finely selected, and finished in a most pleasing manner.

5. A prudence undeceiving, undeceiv'd,
That, nor too little, nor too much believ'd,
That scorn'd unjust suspicion's coward fear,
And without weakness knew to be sincere.

Never were any strokes of character more judiciously combined, nor more happily painted than in these four lines ; they mark the exact line of virtue which borders on weakness.—The whole elegy is a beautiful composition, and, let me add, by far the finest poem his lordship has wrote. The tender affection he bore to his wife, seems in every stanza to elevate his pen, to inspire him with the most pathetic sentiments, and yield a poetic diction finely suited to the mournful subject.

A few miscellaneous poems by lord Littleton are published in the beginning of the second volume of Dodsley's poems. The Progress of Love I shall rank with the pastoral pieces of the present age. The soliloquy of a beauty in the country, wrote while his lordship was at Eton school, is not without wit, and does honour to the early dawning of his genius. Blenheim, though it contains some good strokes, is on the whole but a heavy poem. The following lines are not amiss.

— Lo ! where tow'ring on the height
 Of yon aerial pillar proudly stands
 Thy image, like a guardian God, sublime,
 And awes the subject plain : beneath his feet,
 The German eagles spread their wings, his hand
 Grasps victory, its slave —

The epistle to Dr. Ayscough is a noble poem, full fraught with manly generous sentiments, expressed in a nervous flowing

flowing versification : it is worthy the pen of Pope or Dryden himself. 'Tis wrote from Paris, and the circumstances he mentions relating to the French are finely selected, and most judiciously applied. His description of them is extremely well drawn.

A nation here I pity and admire,
 Whom noblest sentiments of glory fire,
 Yet taught by custom's force, and bigot fear,
 To serve with pride, and boast the yoke they bear :
 Whose nobles born to cringe and to command,
 In courts a mean, in camps a gen'rous band ;
 From each low tool of pow'r content receive
 Those laws, their dreaded arms to Europe give.
 Whose people vain in want, in bondage blest,
 Tho' plunder'd, gay; industrious, tho' oppress'd ;
 With happy follies rise above their fate,
 The just and envy of each wiser state.

The epistle to Mr. Poyntz is a pretty poem, and has some merit. His pen seems particularly calculated for painting

ing the soft passions. The following lines are the best in this piece.

'The point to which our sweetest passions move,
Is to be truly lov'd, and fondly love.
This is the charm that smoothes the troubled breast,
Friend to our health, and author of our rest,
Bids ev'ry gloomy vexing passion fly,
And tunes each jarring string to harmony.
Ev'n while I write, the name of love inspires
More pleasing thoughts, and more enliv'ning fires,
Beneath his pow'r my raptur'd fancy glows,
And ev'ry tender verse more sweetly flows.

The epistle to Pope, Advice to a Lady, and his smaller poems and songs, are pretty pieces, but are not worthy of being particularly mentioned. However, his lordship's character as an agreeable poet, is sufficiently established by his epistle to Dr. Ayscough and his Monody to the memory of his lady. His prose-compositions have great merit. The Dialogues

Dialogues of the Dead are many of them very good, and contain much humour ; indeed the character is too often lost, * and not well enough supported for this manner of writing. The dissertation on the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul is an admirable performance, full of the clearest reasoning, and adapted to the meanest capacity. The Persian letters appear to disadvantage, because there are other performances of the same kind, particularly Montesquieu's, which exceed them ; at present they are different in many passages from what they were,

* But of all the works of this kind, what is truly the most difficult, is a characteristical dialogue upon any philosophical subject. To interweave characters with reasoning, by adapting to the peculiar character of each speaker, a peculiarity not only of thought but of expression, requires the perfection of genius, taste, and judgment.

Elements of Criticism, vol. ii. p. 152.
when

when first published ; as his lordship's sentiments concerning patriotism have changed. His history of Henry II. which has so long employed his pen, is not yet published. I make little doubt but his lordship's penetration will enable him to set that remarkable period, in some respects, in a new light.

Mr. Mason's elegiac powers were fully displayed in the Monody to the memory of Mr. Pope ; which is one of the most beautiful poems he ever wrote. He has imitated the several poetic stiles of Chaucer, Spencer, and Pope, in a most admirable manner. That of Chaucer was easily hit off, but he has performed it in his manner and expressions. The imitation of Spencer is exact ; but that of Milton is most inimitably performed. I cannot prevail on myself to omit quoting

ing the following passage, long as it is, speaking of rhyme.

————— which well the muse
 Might wear for choice, not force ; obstruction none,
 But loveliest ornament. Wond'rous this, yet here
 The wonder refts not ; various argument
 Remains for me, all doubting where to cull
 'The primal grace, where countless graces charm.
 Various this peaceful scene, this mineral roof,
 'This semblance meet of coral, ore, and shell ;
 These pointed crystals fair, 'mid each obscure
 Bright glis'ring ; all these slowly dripping rills
 That tinkling stray amid the cooly cave.
 Yet not this various peaceful scene, with this
 Its mineral roof ; nor this assemblage meet
 Of coral, ore, and shell ; nor mid th' obscure
 These pointed crystals, glis'ring fair ; nor rills
 That straying tinkle thro' the cooly cave ;
 Deal charms more various to each raptur'd sense,
 Than thy mellifluous lay —————

This whole passage is in the very manner of Milton, and most excellently

ly imitated: the resemblance in the latter lines particularly is most happily caught, from a passage which is in every body's memory. Pope himself is the next poet he imitates, and it is not inferior to that of Milton: the following lines are in themselves extremely beautiful, and exactly in Pope's happiest manner.

O ! in that strain if all of wit had flow'd,
 All music warbled, and all beauty glow'd,
 Had liveliest nature, happiest art combin'd,
 That lent each grace, and this each grace refin'd,
 Alas ! how little were my proudest boast :
 The sweetest trifler of my tribe at most.

Mr. Mason imitates the perfections of his poet. This is exactly Pope's versification.

To blend with skill, as loftiest themes inspire,
 All reason's vigour, and all fancy's fire ;

Again,

Again,

Come then, that honest fame, whose sober ray,
Or gilds the satire, or the moral lay.

And soon after,

O ! if like these one poet more could brave,
The venal statesman or the titled slave ;
Brand frontless Vice, strip all her stars and strings,
Nor spare her basking in the smiles of kings !

Any reader that is conversant with Mr. Pope's works, must be sensible of the resemblance which Mr. Mason has so happily caught. The versification is musical and flowing, like that of Pope, and the very *cast* of the lines is exactly in his manner.

His, another elegy by Mr. Mason, is a poem worthy of his pen. The design of it was perhaps rather poultry, but the poetry very beautiful. The university of Oxford

Oxford has been long, and not unjustly, branded with disaffection to the government. Mr. Mason, in the year 1748, thought their late conduct deserved poetical chastisement. Isis is described as leaning pensive on her urn, which is very well described.

Here full with life was heav'n-taught Science seen,
Known by the laurel wreath, and musing mien ;
There cloud-crown'd Fame, here Peace sedate and
bland,
Swell'd the loud trump, and wav'd the olive wand,
While solemn domes, arch'd shades, and vistas green,
At well-mark'd distance close the sacred scene.

The following lines are nervous and manly,

While ev'ry youth with Fame's strong impulse fir'd,
Press'd to the goal, and at the goal untir'd,
Snatch'd each celestial wreath, to bind his brow,
The muses, graces, virtues, could bestow.

The

The thought of Fancy's ranking her
troops on the plains of Memory, is very
beautiful :

E'en now fond Fancy leads th'ideal train,
And ranks her troops on Memory's ample plain.

The lines in praise of Locke are extremely good ; that great philosopher is characterised with great judgment ; the poem has great merit, and cannot but please a reader of any taste. But the attacks which were thus made by Mason, were soon retorted by Mr. Warton of Oxford, in an elegy called the Triumph of Isis. I cannot speak of this poem more properly in any other place.

What tho' your gentle Mason's plaintive verse
Has hung with sweetest wreaths Musæu's hearse,
What tho' your vaunted bard's ingenuous woe,
Soft as my stream, in tuneful numbers flow ?
Yet strove his muse, by fame or envy led,
To tear the laurels from a sister's head.

This elegy of Mr. Warton's is an admirable poem, and exceeds Mr. Mason's in spirit, and nervous versification: indeed it is a much longer poem, but it is full of striking and manly beauties. The following lines are a fine specimen.

But lo ! at once the swelling concerts cease,
 And crowded theatres are hush'd in peace.
 See on yon sage how all attentive stand,
 To catch his darting eye, and waving hand :
 Hark ! he begins, with all a Tully's art,
 To pour the dictates of a Cato's heart.
 Skill'd to pronounce what noblest thought inspir'd,
 He blends the speaker's with the patriot's fire ;
 Bold to conceive, nor tim'rous to conceal,
 What Britons dare to think he dares to tell.
 'Tis his alike the ear and eye to charm,
 To win with action, and with sense to warm.
 Untaught in flow'ry diction to despense
 The lulling sounds of sweet impertinence :
 In frowns or smiles he gains an equal prize,
 Nor meanly fears to fall, nor creeps to rise ;

Bids happier days to Albion be restor'd,
Bids antient justice rear her antient sword ;
From me, as from my country, wins applaſe,
And makes an Oxford's a Britannia's caſte.

These lines are very beautiful, and display the poetic charms of nervous music, and spirited elegance. Speaking of all those who have honoured the university of Oxford, he says,

All who beneath the shades of gentle peace,
Best plann'd the labours of domestic ease ;
Who taught with truth, or with persuasion mov'd,
Who sooth'd with numbers, or with sense improv'd ;
Who told the pow'rs of reason, or refin'd
All, all that strengthen'd or adorn'd the mind.
Each priest of health, who mix'd the balmy bowl,
To rear frail man, and stay the fleeting soul.

The passages I have quoted display great harmony of versification ; and they are not only musical, but nervous and manly. I know few poems in which se-

veral eminent men are so judiciously praised, I mean poetically judiciously & no panegyric is introduced that weakens the spirit of the poem.

Three other elegies have flowed from Mr. Mason's pen since he wrote *His*. The first is To a young nobleman leaving the university. The poet preserves throughout it that conscious dignity which ought to be the characteristic of true poetry ; he deals out his praises with a most cautious hand, and seems very fearful lest he should have been mistaken in their object. The sentiment in the following lines is extremely just.

1. Call we the shade of Pope from that blest bower,

Where thron'd he sits with many a tuneful sage ;
Ask, if he ne'er bemoans that hapless hour,

When St. John's name illumin'd glory's page &c.

Ask,

Ask, if the wretch, who darr'd his mem'ry stain,
 Ask, if his country's, his religion's foe,
 Deserv'd the meed that Marlbro' fail'd to gain,
 The deathless meed he only could bestow?

Nothing can more truly display Lord Bolingbroke's character in its real light, than to consider the charge brought against him in these lines. That he was one of the vilest wretches that ever disgraced the species, is a fact too notorious to be contradicted: he acted towards his friend with deceit, and the most black ingratitude; to his country he was not more tender; his public character is well known in history, and has been long branded with the title of traitor. In a less public manner, he broke through all her laws. He was a heap of all the most detested vices, in the gratification of which no law was able to restrain him. As

to the religion of his country, it is well known how he treated it. His absurd, verbose, philosophical works, contain the most dangerous, tho' despicable tenets. He endeavours, throughout, to set men free from all restraint of human as well as divine laws. He absolutely denies a particular Providence, and endeavours, with all his might, to prove, that all the arguments urged in support of the doctrine of a future state, are absurd and ridiculous. His opinion every where appears, that private persons, provided they can escape punishment from the magistrate, may be as wicked as they please. What now can be impartially thought of such a creed? Yet that it was Bolingbroke's, every page of his works displays. This is the sceptic that our natural religionists cry up in the highest strains

strains of praise; this wretch, whose life was a scene of villainy, and whose writings is a heap of absurdity, blasphemy and contradictions. The publishing such a collection of immoral pieces would alone point out the writer's character. If there was one sentiment throughout his philosophical works, which displayed a benevolent heart, and tended to make mankind better, and sweeten the tie of society, they might deserve some attention; but his doctrine is of the most pernicious kind. The man who embraces it, must lull his reason asleep; for who in their senses can disbelieve a future state, or believe many other of his Lordship's notions? Does not his doctrine break every tie of society, and tend to the utter contempt of all jaws? Who can read him, and not every where discern the cancer'd heart, from

which, such sentiments should be imagined to affirm there is no passage in any of these pieces that speaks the least benevolence in the writer, or which tends to make us love him as a man. Let contempt and disgrace attend the wretch who wrote them, and the wretch who published them.

The following anecdote will place this lord's character in a just light, and show his supercilious and revengeful temper in their proper colours.

M. *de Croufaz* wrote some malignant and absurd remarks on the *Essay on Man*, accusing it of spinozism, naturalism, and all the hereticalisms in the bigot's dictionary. These remarks, by great chance, fell into the hands of the author of the *Divine Legation*; and mere indigation at

an ill-natured caviller, put him upon writing a defence of the first epistle, which being well received, he was induced to defend the rest on the same principles of natural and revealed religion, against the blundering misrepresentations of this Swiss philosopher, and of a certain *French* translator of the essay into verse, by whom M. de *Craafaz* had been frequently misled.

Mr. *Pope*, who was naturally on the side of religion, embraced the sense given to the essay by his new commentator with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction, as appears by the letters he wrote on that occasion. You will hardly suppose his lordship took the same delight in seeing his pupil thus *reasoned* out of his hands, or (what was worse) in seeing

seeing him republish his essay with a defence, which put the poem on the side of religion, and the poet out of the necessity of supporting himself on his lordship's system, when he should condescend to impart it to him ; or (what was worst of all) in seeing him, at the commentator's instance, restore a great number of lines struck out of the manuscript, which no longer left his religious sentiments equivocal.

But the author of *the Divine Legation* soon after committed a much more heinous offence against his lordship's phisophic dignity ; and to this the following words, quoted above, allude : *You have, I know, at your elbow, a very fool-mouthed, and a very trifling critic, who will*

will endeavour to impose upon you on this occasion, as he did on a FORMER.

About the year 1732, a little before Lord Bolingbroke's return to England, this critic was with Mr. Pope at T. who shewed him a printed book of *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, and desired his opinion of it. It was the first volume of the work, since published under that name. Mr. W. on turning it over, told him his thoughts of it with great freedom. What he said to Mr. Pope of the main subject, is not material; but of the digression concerning the authenticity of the Old Testament, he observed to his friend, that the author's arguments, poor as they were, were all borrowed from other writers, and had been confuted again and again to the entire satisfaction of the learned world: that

that the author of these letters, ^{whoever} he was, had mistaken some of these ^{re}sonings, had misrepresented others, and had added such mistakes of his own, as shuſt discredit him with the learned, and dishonour him with all honest men; that therefore, as he had understood that the author was his friend, he could not do him a better service than to advise him to strike out this *digression*, which had nothing to do with his subject, and would set half his readers against the work, whenever it should be published. Mr. Pope faid, his friend (whose name he kept ſecret) was the most candid of men, and that the author of the D. L. could not do him a greater pleasure than to tell him his thoughts freely on this occaſion. He urged this so warmly, that his friend complied; and as they were then alone, ſcribbled over half a dozen ſheets of paper,

per, before he rose from the table where they were sitting. Mr. *Pope* read what he had written ; and as he had a wonderful partiality for those he thought well of, he approved it ; and to convince the scribbler (as my lord rightly calls him) that he did so, he took up the printed volume, and crossed out the whole ~~digressi~~ ~~sign~~ with his pen. It was written, as you may well suppose, with all the civility the writer was likely to use to a friend Mr. *Pope* appeared much to reverence ; but the word *prevarication*, or something like it, chanced, it seems, to escape his pen. The papers were sent to *Paris*, and received with unparalleled indignation. Little broke out, but something did ; and Mr. *Pope* found he had not paid his court by this officious service. However, with regard to the writer of the papers, all was carried, when his

his lordship came over (as he soon afterwards did) with singular politeness, and such a strain of compliments as men are wont to bestow on those whose homage they intend to gain. Yet all this time his lordship was meditating and compiling an angry and elaborate answer to this private, hasty, and impertinent, tho' well-meant scribble; and it was as much as they could do, who had most interest with him, to persuade him at length to burn it. For the truth of this, I might appeal to a noble person, one of the greatest characters of this, or indeed of any age, who, being much courted by his lordship, was for some time able, and at all times most desirous of restraining the extravagance of that *first philosophy*, which he detested and despised.

The

The event has since shewn, that it had been happy for his lordship's reputation, had the advice to strike out the digression been followed, as it is that which has chiefly sunk him in the popular opinion, and lost him the merit of the very best of all his compositions.

Mr. *Pope*, however, was still courted and careffed ; and the vengeance treasured up against him for the impiety of erasing those sacred pages, broke not out till the poet's death : then, indeed, it came with redoubled vehemence, and on the most ridiculous pretence, and the memory of *Pope* traduced in so cruel a manner, that the reader is suffered to conclude, that even *Carl* himself could not have acted a more faithless or mercenary part ; for it must be owned his lordship

Lordship has dealt one equal measure to his COUNTRY, his RELIGION, and his FRIEND *.

The second elegy, written in the garden of a friend, is a very good one; but the third, on the death of Lady Coventry, is the best of the three. The following stanza is very pretty.

2. Early to lose; while born on busy wing,
Ye sip the nectar of each varying bloom,
Nor fear, while basking in the beams of spring,
The wintry storm that sweeps you to the tomb.

These elegies, though they certainly have merit, did not answer the expectation of the public, and were reckoned unworthy of Mr. Mason's pen; perhaps we are too quick in judging of what an

* A View of Bolingbroke's Philosophy, Letter IV.
author

author can do; from which he has
done.

* Ordinairement il n'y a qu'à perdre pour un homme qui a une certaine réputation d'esprit à donner quelque chose au public. Il est rare que l'ouvrage réponde à ce qu'on attendoit de l'auteur; presque toujours on le croyoit capable de mieux. Beaucoup de gens d'esprit; en devenant auteurs, ont perdue une grande partie de l'estime dont ils jouissoient parmi leurs amis & leurs connaissances, & qui delà s'étoit répandue dans le public.

Essais sur divers sujets de Literat. &c. tome iv. p. 7.

The same author observes,

Il paroît peu d'ouvrages aussi bons que l'auteur étoit capable de les faire, & il y en a plusieurs dont il faut moins attribuer la médiocrité au défaut de talens, qu'à la paresse & à la négligence des auteurs. Tels & tels n'avoient pas plus d'esprit & de génie que d'autres écrivains bien moins estimés, mais ils travailloient beaucoup leurs ou-

vrages. L'histoire Litteraire ancienne & moderne en fournit plusieurs exemples. Quelque talent qu'on ait, il est impossible de réussir dans un ouvrage d'une certaine entendue, sans beaucoup de tems & d'application. Cette perfection qui immortalise un bon ouvrage, ne peut être le fruit que de la réunion du talent & du travail.

Essais sur divers sujets de Litterat. &c. tom. iv. p. 4.

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

Of History.

THERE is no species of writing in which the ancients excelled us more than in history. With them, it was not a dry detail of events, but a most elegant and entertaining composition. The Greek and Roman poets did not embellish their fictions more than their historians endeavoured to infuse a spirit of nervous elegance into their manner of describing events. When history thus became the work of the greatest geniuses, it flourished in the utmost perfection ; and, since the time of the Romans, there has never been one historian

who can be compared to many of the antients.

Historians, in general, imagine that they perform all that is expected of them, if they give a true account of the actions they describe ; but herein they mistake much. Every thing is either useful or hurtful to mankind in its effects ; history partakes of either quality in proportion to the degree of genius and morality in the historian. He who commends the bad actions of vicious princes, who paints a wicked character in amiable colours, not by falsifying facts, but by his reflections, confounds the design of history, and destroys the very end of it, which is to make mankind better and wiser, by setting pretended characters in their true light.

An historian ought to demand of himself at every touch, whether that reflection will assist in promoting the knowledge, virtue, and happiness of human nature: he ought to reject whatever does not carry that end in view *. It may perhaps be said, that 'tis the historian's business to represent facts only as they happened. This may be; but the best writers of history have added many reflections to every event of importance they describe. Now, it is not the event itself, so much as the reflections which attend it, that can have the above good effect. The recital of a wicked action, if set in a proper light, may be as edifying as that of the most amiable one. In short, no species of composition is worth the cultivating, unless it is of

* Vide *Reflexions sur l'Histoire*, par Mehegan.

some use to the morals of mankind. The Rambler has a remark on this subject which is worthy of being remembered. Historians, says he, are certainly chargeable with the depravation of mankind, when they relate, without censure, those stratagems of war by which the virtues of an enemy are engaged to his destruction. A ship comes before a port, weather-beaten and shattered, and the crew implore the liberty of repairing their breaches, supplying themselves with necessaries, or burying their dead. The humanity of the inhabitants inclines them to consent ; the strangers enter the town with weapons concealed, fall suddenly on their benefactors, destroy those that make resistance, and become masters of the place. They return home rich with

plunder,

plunder, and their success is recorded to encourage imitation. *

Since the benefit of mankind should be consulted, those historians which delineate human nature, and point out the changes in the manners and spirit of nations, are by far the most useful. The relation of battles and sieges can have very little effect, at least they require greater abilities in an historian to render them entertaining to a philosophic mind, by the depth and penetration of his reflections: but we cannot open a page of a well wrote history that paints human nature, but we must meet with instruction,

For this reason, an historian ought to insist particularly on the laws of the peo-

* Vol. ii. p. 134.

ple whose history he writes ; this is one of the most material objects, and it should be conducted with the greatest circumspection : the causes that occasioned them, and their effects, should be clearly pointed out and explained. In a great measure, the happiness and misery of a nation depends on the laws, and often on those which seem least important ; therefore their progress, changes, and consequences, should be described with a most philosophic penetration.

A superficial observer will never explain the original of the means, by which a people arrived at the height of their grandeur ; for all nations have their rise to a certain point, and then decline : this enquiry is worthy all the care that can be bestowed on it, and requires a great share of penetration to develop causes, which

at first sight have no being. The great fault of our modern historians, is their going on in the same beaten track, without ever examining into the solidity of received opinions; we have seen this in many instances, for when a man of more than ordinary parts writes on some particular subject, the new light in which he sets old objects, the new truths he discovers, prove that his predecessors were men of little courage and penetration.

Great and eminent men, in whatever state or profession they act, ought to be recorded with care. It is to these that we, in a great measure, owe many sublime truths in philosophy, and the arts and sciences: it is not their names, and the dates of their deaths, so much that should be known, as the tendency of their opinions, their truth, and importance,
and

and the discoveries they have made by the force of genius. The history of arts, sciences, and literature, is closely connected with the great men in every country ; no part of history is more entertaining and important, as their progress points out the efforts of the human mind, to gain the knowledge which we so much boast of. The invention of every art and science, however unimportant, should be recorded ; and it is a great mistake in historians to imagine, that the men eminent in literary fame are not in their province : a mention of their names is not sufficient, the character of their works, their excellencies, and defects, should be displayed : politicks, which generally usurp the whole body of histories, has in fact the least right to be recorded.

Religion

Religion should be insisted on with great caution. Those of former times cannot be explained too exactly ; particularly, as we may observe in all ages and in all nations, that there is a certain connection between their religions, and manners and customs, that has often remarkable effects on the human mind. Every thing that tends to develope human nature, and set it in a true point of light, is of the greatest importance. It is the prevailing spirit of nations and ages, that we ought to enquire into.—I cannot but be of opinion, that it is unpardonable, when an historian writes of our own times, to be free in enquiring into the propriety of religious tenets. If they are good, his attacks will have bad consequences ; and if there are absurdities in them, whatever is ordained by the laws of his country ought to him to be sacred. I cannot forgive

Mr.

Mr. Hume's making so malevolent an attack on the religion of his country, as he has done in the two first volumes of his history. The historian's business is to make mankind wiser and better by the justness and solidity of his reflections: can the people of Great Britain, if they were to adopt his notions immediately, be the wiser or better for them? Would his scepticism enlarge their minds, and give them more exalted notions of the Deity? — They could not possibly have any of these consequences. Why then make an illiberal attack on what he cannot improve? Could not Mr. Hume have been contented with jumbling his notions into unphilosophic treatises, without introducing them into a history? Sceptics, who are pleased to be wiser than the legislature of their countries, should keep their opinions to themselves; and if

if the religion of their land
not pure enough for them
consider, that, at the moment
it, they give up all rights as
man who loves his country
face of its laws. If ever a
with so me succeed, who trans-
gresses willingly the laws of
transgress the laws of the
pretended philosophers
them, to show their worth.
Here I only speak of
ever nation they are

As to that part of the history
which regards the
wars; the
it necessary, and it requires
ment. Tediouss accounts
sieges belong more properly
nalists of the 250; it is

Business to display their consequences, and the degrees of loss, or the acquisitions of power, which either party makes : he should examine into the common opinion of the importance of conquests, for it often has happened, that an acquisition of territory has weakened the conqueror. Another material point which a good historian will never neglect, is the progress which is made in the military art : by examining into this source of success, he will be able to set many victories in a clear light, which, for want of attending to seeming trifles, were supposed to be gained by the dint of bravery. The sublimer part of the art of war he should be as exact in as possible : as it is necessary to record actions that are not for the benefit of mankind, they should be treated in the most clear and comprehensive manner.

manner. Some campaigns display such astonishing abilities in the generals, that, to the honour of humanity, genius, which otherwise would be buried in oblivion, should be recorded. In the wars of Cæsar, Hannibal, Marlborough, or Turenne, besides many more, we shall meet with a thousand events, that display the vastness of capacity in those great men. 'Tis true, they are blended with the horrible pictures with which wars are attended; but the historian may, in a great measure, remedy this evil, by the propriety and solidity of his reflections.

I forbear to speak of truth and impartiality; they are so essential to the nature of history, that they form its very foundations: this will admit of no doubt; therefore to enlarge on it, can only

only be to paint every man's ideas on the subject, and of which he is so fully persuaded, that no arguments can strengthen the opinion. Yet this first, and greatest obligation in an historian, is continually broke through and disregarded, through a spirit of party, or national prejudice.

The stile of history* ought to be grand and majestic, clear and elegant. It is, says Mr. Addison, the most agreeable talent of an historian, to be able to draw up his armies, and fight his battles in proper expressions, to set before our eyes the

* Rapin's definition of the historic stile is strangely absurd : Mais le style le plus propre à l'histoire est celui qui a plus le caractère de la vérité, & ou cet état naturel de sincérité, dont la vérité est ordinairement accompagnée, paroît davantage, car—says he—on croit assément ce qui à cet air-là. *Réflexions sur l'histoire. Les Oeuvres du P. Rapin, tome ii. p. 225.*

divi-

divisions, cabals, and jealousies of great men, and to lead us step by step into the several actions and events of his history. We love to see the subject unfolding itself by just degrees, and breaking upon us insensibly, that so we may be kept in pleasing suspense, and have time given us to raise our expectations, and to side with one of the parties concerned in the relation. I confess this shows more the art than the veracity of the historian ; but I am only to speak of him, as he is qualified to please the imagination. And, in this respect, Livy has perhaps excelled all who went before him, or have written since his time. He describes every thing in so lively a manner, that his whole history is an admirable picture, and touches on such proper circumstances in every story, that his reader becomes a kind of spectator, and

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feels in himself all the variety of passions which are correspondent to the several parts of the relation.

The stile should be every where equal ; or if any parts are laboured more than others, it should be those which require the historian's imagination to set them off ; yet the subject should never seem to rise or fall, but flow on in a constant equal stream. The following paragraph is the conclusion to a late bad wrote history.—

“ The period at which his majesty came to the throne was so extremely brilliant for Great Britain, that his accession promised a reign equally glorious to himself, and advantageous to his subjects. He ascended the throne at a time, when his kingdoms were engaged in a truly national and fortunate war. He had the happiness to see faction banished from home,

home; and his arms victorious abroad. That unparalleled unanimity which took place among all ranks of people, when the odious names of Whig and Tory were no more, but when every one was desirous to be distinguished by no other title than that of Briton; then it was that our victorious arms carried terror and conquest to the furthest regions of the earth, and reduced France, our constant and once formidable enemy, to the low state in which we see her at present. It was reserved for his majesty to become the sovereign of these imperial realms, at a period when they were dreaded, and respected by all their neighbours, when British fleets sailed unresisted to the remotest regions, and when a concatenation of events all tended to exalt her power, and extend her influence and dominion, and to raise her sove-

reign to that pitch of prosperity, as justly formed him the greatest monarch in the universe."*—This now is the stile of declamation, but not history ; besides, by perusing the work, we find it is not natural, and nothing but a flourish to conclude with.

In respect of stile, I know no history in the English language, wrote in so good a stile as Dr. Robertson's history of Scotland, which is composed with all that nervous elegant dignity, which so finely suits the subject of history. No quaintness, no meanness of composition appears ; but the narrative rolls on with a grave yet pleasing majesty. Mr. Hume also has wrote a history, in very elegant pleasing language, and in a manner which renders it extremely entertaining ; but if

* Complete Hist. of the present War, p. 447.

compared with Dr. Robertson's, I think the latter has hit off the true historic stile far more exactly, though many passages in Mr. Hume's are composed with great dignity, but in general his stile is not equal. In respect to penetration and solidity in a multiplicity of remarks, he has no superior.

An historian ought to omit no incident that serves to describe the chief persons he speaks of, and to discover the true causes of events ; but he avoids all those curious disquisitions, that tend only to display the author's knowledge ; he shows his critical skill only, in relating those facts as doubtful, which really are so ; and in leaving them to the reader's judgment, after giving him the best information he could. He who has rather a talent for learning and criticism, than a

genius for history, will not abate his readers the least date, or any incident however dry and impertinent; not even the most useless circumstance: he follows his own humour, without regarding the public taste; he would have every body as fond as he is of those trifles that employ his insatiable curiosity. On the contrary, a cautious and discreet historian drops all insignificant facts that give the reader no light into any important point. By leaving out these useless incidents, you take nothing from the history; for they only interrupt and lengthen it, and make it a collection of historical scraps, without any thread of lively narration: such a scrupulous exactness should be left to compilers. The main point is to give the reader an easy view of important things, to show him their connection, and to lead him on speedily to

to unravelling of the whole : herein history ought somewhat to resemble an epic poem.* The chief perfection of history consists in the order and disposal of its parts. To attain to this beautiful order, the historian must have one clear and comprehensive view of his whole subject ; he should try to place it in various lights, till he finds out its truest point of view. He must show its unity ; and draw, as it were, from one source all the events that depend upon it. By this method he instructs his readers in the most useful things, and gives them the pleasure of foreseeing the sequel of events. He engages their attention ; he sets before their eyes a scheme of the most important affairs, in every period of time ; he points out to them what is most likely to result

* See the Archbishop of Cambray's Letter to the French Academy.

from it : he makes them argue without arguing himself ; he spares them many repetitions ; he never lets them grow weary ; the connection he gives to various facts makes the whole narration be easily remembered.

But although there is a unity necessary in the managing the subject ; yet I cannot subscribe to the opinion of Mr. Moor, who draws a parallel between the epic poem and a just history, and concludes that a history ought to be composed in point of subject on the same rules as the former. Indeed when an historian describes only *one* action, as the expedition of the ten thousand, and the conspiracy of Catiline, he may treat his subject on those rules ; but in a general history of the affairs of a nation, he will be obliged to deviate from it. It may be said that the whole

whole history may be planned as one event, with a regular beginning and end ; but I answer, this will be laying down rules for composing a good history ; but so slight a resemblance cannot be sufficient to connect them to the same rules.

An episode is vicious, if it can be taken from the poem without injuring it ; now what a multitude of episodes would an historian have to interweave in his work, that could not be connected by the rules of the poet : but thus far it must be allowed, that the nearer the historian approaches the epic poet, in point of composition of subject, the more excellent his work will be. Mr. Moor's opinion of the excellency of Sallust and Xenophon is worthy being quoted, " The expedition of the ten thousand, and the conspiracy of Catiline, are, I think,

think, two master-pieces in their kind. These two, if I mistake not, will stand the severest test of Aristotle's rules for the composition of an epic poem: and suffer nothing even when examined by the same standard, by which we judge of the composition of the Iliad and Æneid. So too I believe will the Jugurthine war: except only in one, and that but a very small particular; not at all any of the essential parts, but a little story brought in by way of episode, I mean of the two gallant Carthaginians, who voluntarily sacrificed their lives to purchase an extent of territory to their country. The story well deserved indeed to be recorded; being truly, as Sallust calls it, *facinus egregium & memorabile*. It is also brought in, at a proper pause, and without interruption to the action, if I may call it so, of the history; and that too in the very

very point where it could only be mentioned. *Eam rem*, says he, *nos locus admonuit*. But yet I think he has missed giving it the propriety of an episode, by not giving it the due insertion, by not uniting and connecting it with what it is between. To prove it wants this, I shall only say, that, without altering one single syllable, either before or after it, you may cut the whole story out of the book, without missing it in the least, or leaving the smallest suspicion there had ever been any thing between. But this is, if at all, so very small a blemish, as scarcely needs a censure, in a work which is otherwise so uniformly finished in its composition. In these three finished pieces of antient history, every reader of any taste has, I imagine, found a particular satisfaction and entertainment, which he meets with in few others, arising from this justness of

of taste in the unity of their composition. By which the mind has always before it the progress of one great event or system of actions, never is called off to any thing trivial or foreign ; the attention is never interrupted nor perplexed, nor the imagination embarrassed, nor the memory loaded with any thing that is not a proper part of that ONE WHOLE which makes the subject ; the action from the first is never broken, never interrupted, nor retarded. We go along with it easily and regularly, in its causes, in its beginning, and through its whole progress, to the end ; every particular event which makes a part of this one whole, is represented, without confusion, by itself, till it comes to insert, and be connected with some others, and all together united in the whole.*

* Moor's Essays, p. 145.

I shall

I shall not here revive a dispute, that most writers on history have fallen into, on the question, Whether antient or modern history is the most important? Such dissertations as these can be of little use; but I wonder how curiosity could have given rise to so many arguments as have been produced on both sides, since it seems clear that the most important subject for a historian, now to write on, ought to be chosen from modern times. Those of antiquity are exhausted, every period almost has an history, which describes the transactions of it. Add to this, the historians of the antients are greatly beyond the modern in the art of history, and soar as much above us as they do in poetry and eloquence; consequently a modern historian appears to great disadvantage, when he comes after such celebrated masters.

If

If we consider the subject with regard to improvement from studying it, the modern history will still be found most proper for that end. By its connection with the times we live in, we are more interested in its events ; the smaller details of it will not be so tedious, as when many centuries are past since they were performed. Antient history will be more apt to strike, elevate, and surprize ; as no actions that have been performed since are of near such importance, or attended with such great consequences. This will appear, if we consider, that one battle then generally transformed the empire of the world from one party to another ; now battles are fought by dozens without securing the possession of forty miles of territory : this difference is owing to the great alterations that have happened

pened in the art of war since the invention of gunpowder.

The actions we read of in the Greek and Roman histories, strike us more than those of modern ones, because they were performed with such astonishing rapidity. Our soul is naturally hurried on, not only by the vehemence of the historian, but more by that of his hero. We are more attentive to the fate of a hero, who was to decide the empire of the world by a battle, than a modern king when he engages : the consequences were greater, and the idea of the immense dominions that are at stake, makes us greatly interested when they are disputed.

In regard to the lives of the ancient sages and philosophers, I cannot think they are so worthy of being studied as those

those of modern ones. It is a mistake to imagine that modern history cannot furnish us with such edifying instances. It can with those that are much more so ; we are more interested in the life of a christian philosopher than an antient heathen ; we may admire the force of virtue in the latter, but we may imitate the philosophy of the former.

Neither antient nor modern history should be studied to the exclusion of the other : and though we are more interested in recent transactions, and they ought most to be attended to, yet no man of taste will be contented with one without the other.

Modern history, till very lately, was not so useful as it might have been rendered, had our modern historians understood the

end

end of all history. Rapin is a collector of facts, but Mr. Hume reasons on his facts; and those admirable summary chapters of manners, &c. which he gives us at the end of each period, point out to us what former historians have been deficient in. We there see the progress of arts, sciences, trade, and manufactures; we perceive how gradually, and from what causes, we became a maritime nation and a powerful people; we see the progress of literature and knowledge, and the introduction of the elegancies of life: these subjects, so much more interesting than a thousand battles, are treated by Mr. Hume with that accuracy, precision, and penetration, which not only enlivens his history, but renders it truly instructive. Mons. de Voltaire, in his Essay on Universal History, describes, with the most animated pencil, the same

important affairs throughout the world during many centuries ; he gives us in that beautiful picturesque piece the very essence of a thousand histories, not tired with tedious relations, but entertained with the progress of the human mind in every nation. This is treating history in a just manner, and drawing from it that knowledge and instruction for which it is only worth studying ; and, in this respect, modern history certainly deserves our notice more than the ancient. And as to the accounts we have of the barbarous ages, in which the human mind was so greatly sunk in ignorance and superstition, it only raises our indignation : about the latter end of the fifteenth century every thing begins to be of consequence ; a bright sun then dawn'd above the hemisphere, which has since continued to shine with increasing splendor.

The

The celebrated writer I just now mentioned, justly observes, that we now begin to pay very little regard to the adventure of Curtius, who closed a gulf by leaping with his horse to the bottom. We make a jest of bucklers brought down from heaven, and of all the fine talismans which the gods so liberally presented to mankind ; of the vestals, who set a vessel a-float with a girdle, and of all that world of fooleries with which many ancient historians abound. We are not much better satisfied with M. Rollin, who, in his ancient history, gravely makes mention of king Nabis, who suffered all those to embrace his wife, who brought him money, and put those who refused to gratify his avarice into the arms of a beautiful image that perfectly resembled the queen, and whose stays

were covered with iron spikes. We laugh, when we see so many authors repeat, one after another, that the famous Attone, archbishop of Mentz, was, in the year 912, besieged and eaten by an army of rats; that, in 1017, Gascony was overflowed by a shower of blood; and that in 1059 two armies of serpents fought near Tournay. Prodigies, predictions, trials by fire, &c. are at present held in the same rank as the accounts given by Herodotus. We should treat of modern history, in which we find neither puppets that embrace courtiers, nor bishops eaten by rats.

There is a fault on the other hand not less contrary to the true spirit of history, and that is dwelling only on those periods in the history of particular countries, and those states, in general histories, which

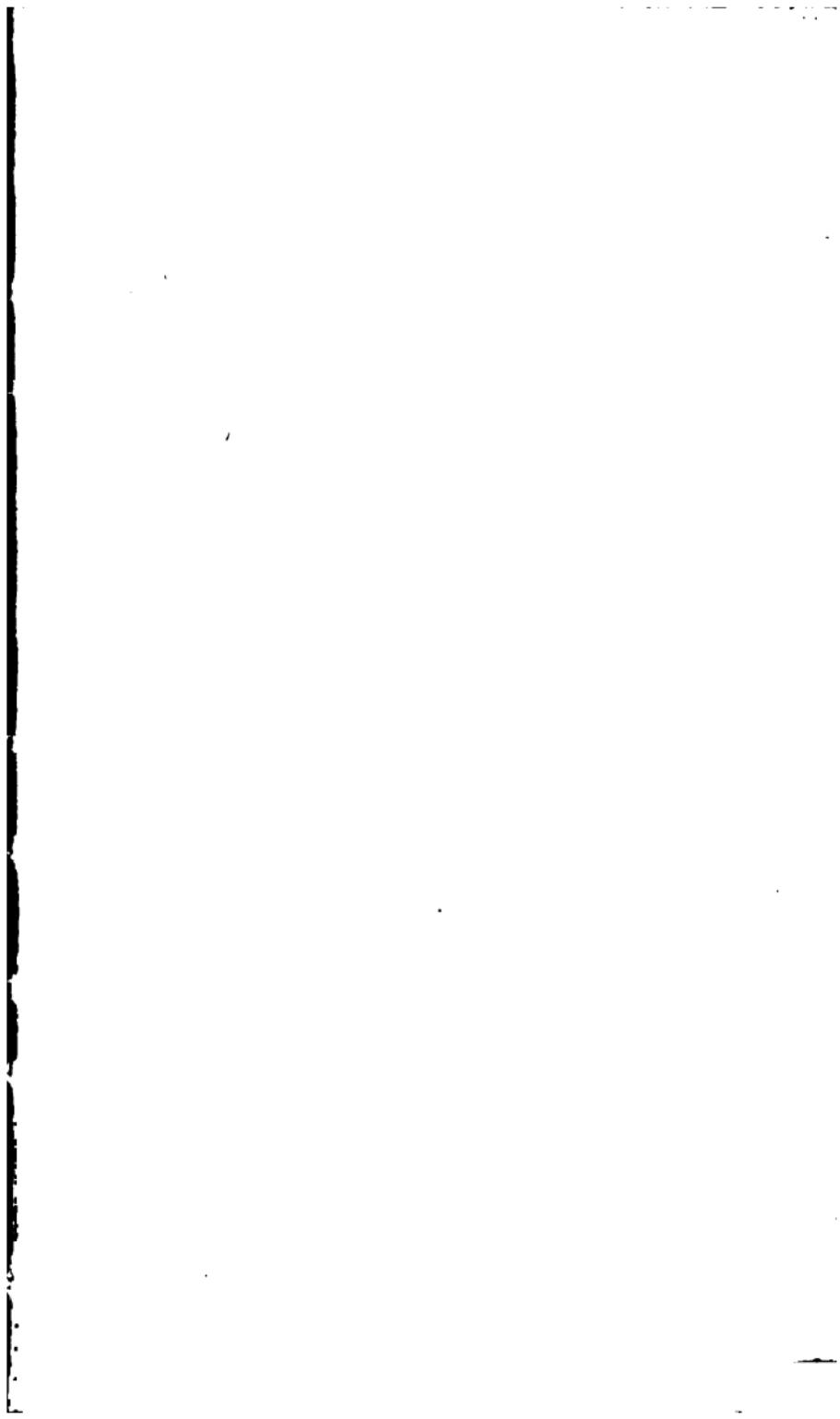
which exhibit only striking events. In more calm periods, and countries, not generally known, we shall find a vast number of objects worthy our attention. A people's not shining much in the historic page, is sometimes a proof of their wisdom ; they may perhaps be governed by laws, and possess many maxims and customs which secure their quiet at home, and their peace abroad : these should be studied, and not overlooked ; and those simple annals should be exhibited to the world, which describe the affairs of a people who interfere little with their neighbours, and who, from that very circumstance, may be suspected of being worthy the minutest inquiries *.

* The celebrated Rousseau has a remark which displays great penetration, tho' he carried it rather too far. He says, *Un des grands vices de l'histoire*

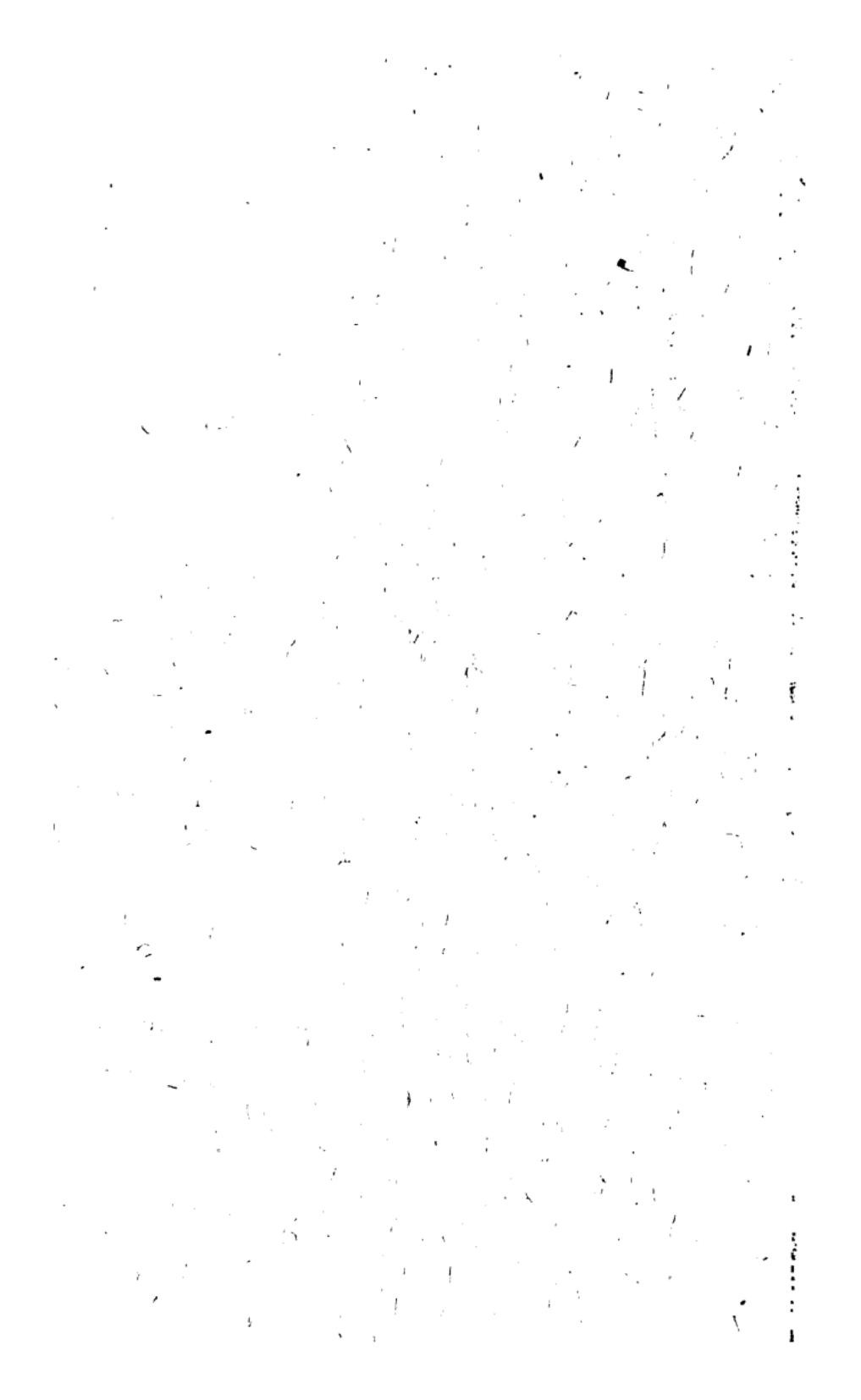
toire est qu'elle peint beaucoup plus les hommes par leurs mauvais cotés que par les bons : comme elle n'est interessante que par les revolutions, les catastrophes, tant qu'un peuple croit & prospere dans le calme d'un paisible gouvernement, elle n'en dit rien ; elle ne commence à en parler que quand, ne pouvant plus se fuffire à lui-même, il prend par aux affaires de ses voisins, ou les laisse prendre part aux siennes ; elle ne l'illustre que quand il est déjà sur son declin : toutes nos histoires commencent ou elles devroient finir. Nous avons fort exactement celle des peuples qui se detruisent, ce qui nous manque est celle des peuples qui se multiplient ; ils sont assez heureux & assez sages pour qu'elle n'ait rien à dire d'eux : & en effet, nous voyons, même de nos jours, que le gouvernemens qui se conduisent le mieux, sont ceux dont on parle le moins. Nous ne savons donc que le mal, à peine le bien fait-il époque. Il n'y a que les mechans de célébres, le bons sont oubliés ou tournés en ridicule ; & voilà comment l'histoire, ainsi que la philosophie, calomnie sans cesse le genre humain.

Emile, tome ii. p. 275.

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